

# **Fourth Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting**

## **Minutes of the Meeting (United Nations, New York, 24-26 June 2009)**

1. The Fourth Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) was hosted in New York from 24-26 June 2009. It was opened by Mr. Paul Cheung, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and chaired by Mr. Peter Harper, Chair of UNCEEA and Deputy Australian Statistician.
2. The Fourth Meeting of the UNCEEA was organized as follows: the first day provided an opportunity for the Committee to understand the data needs of various policy frameworks in particular those linked to UNDP activities in climate change and UNEP's activities on the green economy, resource efficiency and resource productivity and the economics of ecosystem services. The morning of the second day presented the responses of three countries to the policy needs as outlined by the different frameworks that are being developed or have been put in place in Canada, India and the Netherlands.
3. The remaining one and half days focused on the regular work of the UNCEEA, in particular the follow-up to the decisions of the UN Statistical Commission in February 2009. The meeting addressed: (a) the mandate and governance of the UNCEEA; (b) the biennial and five year programme of work of the UNCEEA; (c) the progress of work on the revision of the SEEA; (d) the progress made on the implementation of the SEEA-Water in the various regions, lessons learnt from the Global Assessment on Water Statistics and Accounting and a proposed way forward to strengthen the implementation of water statistics and accounting; (e) the mandate of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics; and (f) the progress of work of the groups working under the auspices of the Committee.
4. A list of tasks and activities to be undertaken by the UNCEEA as agreed during the meeting is presented in Annex I. The organization of work and list of participants is included in Annex II and III respectively.

### **Agenda item 1 - Opening of the meeting**

#### **Main points:**

- *The UNCEEA recognized its important strategic role of the UNCEEA in shaping up the international programme of work in environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting*
- *The UNCEEA stressed the importance of engaging the data-using community in the effort to collect and produce data that meet policy needs*

- *The UNCEEA noted that National Statistical Offices have a crucial role to play in providing much of the necessary information for policy and decision-making on climate change*

### **Summary of the statements:**

5. In his opening statement, Mr. Cheung noted that the project on the revision of the SEEA was given the highest priority in the international statistical agenda by the UN Statistical Commission, and urged the Committee to strengthen its commitment to the revision process to ensure its timeliness and success. He expressed his satisfaction with the progress made on the implementation of the SEEAW thanks also to the joint efforts of the regional commissions and encouraged the UNCEEA to seek closer cooperation with the water community as part of the way forward to strengthen the quality of water data available at the country level. In this regard, Mr. Cheung informed the UNCEEA that UNSD is planning to organize an expert group meeting to develop a framework, based on previous guidelines published by the United Nations, that will assist countries in the establishment of a national environment statistics system. Mr. Cheung urged the Committee to give adequate attention to the review of the mandate and he expressed his conviction that the Committee has a very important strategic role in shaping up the international programme of work in environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting. He further underlined that the Committee has a great potential as the body representing the global statistical system to speak on issues related to environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting.

6. Mr. Peter Harper, Chair of the UNCEEA, stressed the importance of engaging the data-using community in the effort to collect and produce data that meet policy needs. These needs must be considered in evaluating the UNCEEA mandate, and the need for its voice on the broader environmental statistics agenda.

7. Ms. van de Weerd of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) opened the morning session on climate change focusing in particular on UNDP activities on climate change. She noted that climate change will have profound impacts on development paradigm: economies will have to transform into low carbon consumption and production patterns, the amount of money generated as a result of functioning carbon markets to be spent in developing countries to reduce emissions will become increasingly significant (in the order of magnitude of three times as much as current ODA), deforestation and in particular compensation for maintaining forests as carbon sinks are an increasing important issue, currently on the table for the Copenhagen negotiations. This change in paradigm will involve many new data needs and monitoring challenges. She noted that National Statistical Offices have a crucial role to play providing the necessary information for policy and decision-making. The Statistical Office should be ready when they will be requested to provide the necessary data. The UNCEEA should develop guidelines to assist countries in developing the information systems that are and will be needed to answer the policy questions outlined above. In this regard, the work that the UNCEEA is doing in developing an international statistical standard linking the economy and the environment will prove very useful in the years to come.

### **Agenda Item 2 – Nexus of Economic Growth, Development and Environment**

## **2a. Climate Change (Organized by the United Nations Development Programme)**

### **Outcome and actions:**

- *SEEA provides a way forward in integrating emission inventories with economic information – issue that has become increasingly policy relevant*
- *Statistical offices at the national and international level to become engaged in the development of emission inventories*
- *The UNCEEA recommended to develop a strategy on climate change covering:*
  - (a) *Familiarization by the statistical community of the data needs for emission inventories*
  - (b) *Linkage between emission inventories and air emission accounts as part of SEEA*
- *The UNCEEA requested the assistance of the UNDP in promoting SEEA, acknowledging that the SEEA is virtually unknown outside the statistical community*

### **Summary of discussion:**

#### ***National inventories of greenhouse gas emissions***

8. The presentation informed the Committee of the extensive UNDP programme to assist developing countries (about 135) to prepare climate change national communication strategies and in particular the challenges encountered in the development of national inventories of greenhouse gases. The issues identified included: (a) institutional coordination – information is dispersed in different agencies each using different concepts, definitions, classifications and methodologies making the data integration difficult; (b) difficulty in understanding the responsibility of various agencies in collecting, compiling and disseminating specific data items; (c) lack of involvement of NSOs. Furthermore, the presentation stressed the policy need of integrating the emission inventories with economic information and identified that the SEEA provides a way forward.

9. The UNCEEA noted that the issues in compilation of emission inventories are common to the development of many statistical programmes that are not yet well established, including environmental-economic accounting. It recommended that the statistical offices both at the national and international level become engaged in the development of emission inventories. In particular, it noted that the statistical community has a role to play in standardizing concepts, classifications and data items, ensuring its quality and improving the efficiency of data collection by ensuring that data collected once are used for many purposes. The UNCEEA should develop a strategy to ensure that the work being done by the statistical community is coordinate with the on-going work on climate change undertaken by UNFCCC and UNDP. The strategy paper should also cover the need for the statistical community to familiarize itself with the data needs for the compilation of emission inventories as well as linking them to the economic accounts. Furthermore, the UNCEEA noted that better coordination between the NSOs and the climate change national focal points was essential.

### ***Bali road map, climate change and official statistics***

10. The presentation focused on the implications of the Bali roadmap for information needs. It was noted that climate change is intimately linked to economic growth and sustainable development goals. Furthermore, the road map puts great emphasis on actions that are measurable, reportable and verifiable (MRV). The SEEA was identified as a very useful tool as it integrates the environmental information with the economic information. There are however, methodological issues that need to be addressed related in particular to differences in the mitigation and adaptation sectors and the statistical classification of industries (ISIC). It was noted that the SEEA is virtually unknown outside the statistical community and UNDP urged the statistical community to get engaged in the future methodological developments that would result from the Copenhagen meeting next December.

### **2b. Green Economy, Resource Productivity, The Economics of Ecosystem Services (Organized by the United Nations Environment Programme)**

#### **Outcome and actions:**

- *Interagency statement mentions that “there is a need for rapid standardization and operationalisation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting...”*
- *The UNCEEA requested that UNEP, in consultation with other agencies, take the lead on developing a paper identifying the statistical questions that emerge from developing a monitoring system for the green economy and suggesting a way forward*
- *The UNCEEA requested UNSD to coordinate participation of statistical experts in UNEP groups to support the Green Economy Initiative*

#### **Summary of discussion:**

##### ***Green Economy Initiative***

11. The UNCEEA welcomed the presentation on the Green Economy initiative, which was launched by UNEP with the involvement of many UN agencies to mobilize and re-focus the global economy towards investments in clean technologies and 'natural' infrastructure such as forests and soils is the best bet for real growth, combating climate change and triggering employment. The Green Economy initiative is organized around the following six themes/sectors: Ecosystems (or environmental infrastructure); Clean and efficient technology; Renewable energy; Biodiversity-based products and services (such as organic foods); Chemical and waste management and mitigation technologies; “Green Cities” - tomorrow’s habitat for humanity - with ecologically friendly buildings, construction, and transport systems.

12. The Inter-agency statement that was released on 25 June on the Green Economy during the UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development read “...a sound monitoring system is essential. There is a need for a rapid standardization and operationalisation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and additional systems that adequately capture the social and environmental dimensions of economic transformations”.

13. Several questions on the role of the statistical community were raised. “Green economy” and “green jobs” have become common policy terms but they are not clearly defined. How far can the statistical community go in defining the boundaries? Is the green economy a moving target as the thinking is evolving very quickly and it may be too early to standardize its measurements? How can the themes/sectoral approaches be linked to the accounts?

14. It was suggested that experts from the statistical community participate in the on-going work of the sector/theme groups that are being established by UNEP. The UNCEEA requested UNSD to coordinate the participation of experts in those groups. Further, the UNCEEA requested UNEP to take the lead on developing a paper identifying the statistical questions that emerge from developing a monitoring system for the green economy and suggesting a way forward. The UNCEEA recognized that there is a need to move quickly and requested that the paper be submitted to the Bureau before the next UNCEEA meeting.

### ***The Economics of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (TEEB)***

#### **Outcome and actions:**

- *The UNCEEA recommended that the World Bank engage UNEP to provide input in Volume 2 of the revised SEEA*

#### **Summary of discussion**

15. The Committee welcomed the presentation on TEEB. It considered the objectives of TEEB to mainstream the economics of ecosystem and biodiversity to be a very important promotion exercise. Furthermore, the work being done for TEEB in particular advancing the methodologies on the classification and valuation of ecosystems and biodiversity would serve as a useful input in particular for Volume 2 of the revised SEEA. It cautioned against combining valuation methods not consistent with the market valuation methods to obtain environmentally-adjusted aggregates.

### ***Resource productivity***

#### **Outcome and actions:**

- *International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management recognized the need for an information to monitor the impacts of strategies and measures to increase resource productivity and to better understand decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation*
- *The UNCEEA noted that the SEEA provides a a useful framework for analysis and monitoring SCP policies*
- *The UNCEEA recommended that the “glossy publication” on the contribution of the SEEA to Sustainable Consumption and Production be prepared by DEFRA and UNEP in collaboration with the Panel*

#### **Summary of discussion:**

16. The Committee welcomed the presentation on Resource Efficiency and Resource Productivity. It noted that the work of the International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management and UNEP activities on resource efficiency and productivity presented an

opportunity for closer cooperation. The Panel appreciates the need for an information system to monitor the impacts of strategies and measures to increase resource productivity and to better understand the decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation.

### **Agenda Item 3 – Frameworks for Environmental-Economic Accounting and Environment Statistics**

#### **Outcome and actions:**

- *The UNCEEA took note of the presentations of Statistics Netherlands, Statistics Canada and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation of India*
- *The UNCEEA noted that the relationship between ‘environmental statistics’ and ‘environmental-economic accounting’ and what is intended with the term framework needed further discussion and suggested that the proposed expert group that will redevelop the framework for the development of environments statistics should consider this issue*
- *The UNCEEA noted that an efficient interaction between users and producers of statistics is very important and a way to disseminate statistical information stemming from the accounts should be given further consideration*
- *The UNCEEA expressed general support to the development of a framework for environment statistics with the understanding that this framework is complementary with the SEEA in terms of analytical, communication and quality purposes.*

#### **Summary of discussion:**

17. This agenda item showed how three countries have addressed user needs in designing their environmental accounting/environment statistics frameworks. The responses are quite different ranging from a well developed approach with broad coverage environmental-economic accounting approach by Statistics Netherlands to a conceptual framework focused on improving the basic environmental data that would serve as an input in the accounts and beyond the accounts by Statistics Canada and to a specific resource account for a region in India including adjustments to value added not only for depletion but also for the ecosystem services provided by the forest, using valuation techniques that go beyond market valuation.

18. The Dutch environmental accounts are very comprehensive. They cover physical and hybrid flow accounts for air emissions, water quantity and emission accounts and waste accounts; asset accounts for oil and natural gas and crude oil and monetary accounts for environmental protection expenditures and environmental taxes. There are plans to improve the accounts and expand them to material flow accounts, environment industry and climate change accounts, including mission permits and environment subsidy accounts. The accounts are compiled from existing statistics and used to answer several policy and data needs, including climate change, water management and reporting to the Water Framework Directive. Environmental accounting is a high priority research area within Statistics Netherlands staffed 4 to 5 full-time equivalent employees. In addition, the methodological research, compilation and publication of indicators on

sustainable development is also considered a high priority research area staffed with 7-8 full-time equivalent employees.

19. The Canadian framework focuses on improving the basic environment statistics including but not limited to the input data for the environmental accounts. A key aspect of the framework is its explicit recognition of quality issues as part of the framework development. The framework stemmed from the consideration that environmental data sets have historically been developed to respond to specific, individual policy initiatives. This makes the integration of data sets difficult because of inconsistent classifications, definitions and methodologies. Furthermore, the accounts and the way they are disseminated did not seem to fully meet users' needs. An efficient interaction between users and producers of statistics was considered very important and a way to disseminate statistical information stemming from the accounts should be given further consideration. The UNCEEA discussed the relationship between 'environmental statistics' and 'environmental-economic accounting' and what is intended with the term framework needed further discussion and that the proposed expert group that will redevelop the framework for the development of environments statistics should consider this issue. The UNCEEA expressed general support to the development of a framework for environment statistics with the understanding that this framework is complementary with the SEEA in terms of analytical, communication and quality purposes.

20. The representative of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation of India presented the outcome of a research project commissioned by it on forest accounting in the region of Karnataka. The study resulted in the compilation of forest accounts covering not only timber but also non-timber products and in estimates of adjusted state domestic product for depletion and degradation as well as for the services provided by the forest. The study combined many valuation methods, some of which not consistent with the valuation of the SNA. The UNCEEA advised against combining valuation methods such as contingent valuation that include all consumer surplus with SNA based valuations that are based on market prices in the derivation of environmentally-adjusted aggregates and called for caution in the interpretation of these aggregates.

#### **Agenda Item 4 – Governance, Mandate, and Terms of Reference for the Committee: Paper prepared by the UNSD**

##### **Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Noted that the interpretation of its mandate was not clear cut and it requested the Bureau of the UNCEEA to prepare a new draft for its consideration*
- *Discussed the scope of its mandate and noted that it should cover those environment and energy statistics that support environmental-economic accounts to ensure coherence of the input statistics with the output framework of the SEEA including relevant classifications*
- *Agreed to not explicitly mention climate change in the mandate but include it in work programme as part of the area "Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues"*

- *Recommended to modify the text describing the relationship between the UNCEEA and other groups working within the scope of its mandate to take into account that the groups may have their own mandates and governance*

21. The UNCEEA discussed the paper on the mandate, governance and terms of reference for the UNCEEA, which was submitted to the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its 40<sup>th</sup> meeting in February. The UNSC “noted that there were differing views regarding the proposed expansion of the mandate of the Committee to include environment and climate change statistics, and requested the Committee to review its mandate, terms of reference and governance structure to reflect the focus of its work on environmental-economic accounting and its role in environment and climate change statistics” (UNSC Report decision 40/104 (c)). It requested to submit any revisions to the Bureau of the UNSC for review. The UNSC also requested that the Committee develop a programme of work consistent with its mandate and priorities.

22. The UNCEEA considered it necessary to streamline and further clarify the wording used in the paper UNCEEA/4/14 in order to ensure a clear cut understanding of the UNCEEA scope of work. The UNCEEA expressed differing views on the interpretation of the mandate: some considered that the original mandate was already broad enough and did not need to be expanded. Others felt that the text on the expanded mandate clarified the scope of the UNCEEA work programme. In particular, the UNCEEA considered important to define “environment statistics”, because the scope of environment statistics could be very broad encompassing spatially, temporally or unit specific data maintained for regulatory or other purposes that require much greater detail than is needed for statistical purposes. To that end, the UNCEEA agreed to limit the scope of its mandate to the those environment and energy statistics that support environmental-economic accounts to ensure coherence of the input statistics with the output framework of the SEEA. This would ensure that basic statistics are developed according to agreed international classifications facilitating their integration with economic and other official statistics.

23. The UNCEEA recommended not to explicitly mention climate change in the mandate. Climate change was considered as a policy issue, for which the statistical community should provide a statistical response stemming from the multi-purpose information systems developed as part of official statistics, such as the SEEA and environment statistics. The UNCEEA recommended that climate change be explicitly mentioned in the programme of work in the area (e) Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues.

24. The UNCEEA requested that the text on governance dealing in particular with the relationship between the UNCEEA and other groups be modified. In particular, the text should be clear that the UNCEEA would coordinate its activities with other groups whose work programme is within the scope of the mandate of the UNCEEA to take into account that these groups may have their own mandates and governance.

25. The UNCEEA requested that the Bureau provide a new draft of the mandate for its consideration.

## **Agenda Item 5 – Review of the Mandate of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics: Paper prepared by the ISWG-Environment Statistics**

### **Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Expressed general support of the mandate but suggested to clarify the text in particular concerning conceptual methodological work, work on environmental indicators and training to ensure no overlap and complementarity with the work of UNCEEA*
- *Agreed that the ISWG-Environment Statistics mandate should cover all activities related to international data collection and compilation, including development of questionnaires, collection, compilation, dissemination and data exchange methodologies and related training and capacity building*

### **Summary of discussion:**

26. The UNCEEA discusses the paper reviewing the mandate of the ISWG-Environment Statistics. The UNCEEA expressed general support with the mandate, however it noted that the text may need to be reviewed, in particular concerning conceptual methodological work, work on environmental indicators and training to ensure no overlap and complementarity with the work of UNCEEA.

27. As such, the ISWG-Environment Statistics mandate would cover all activities related to international data collection and compilation, including development of questionnaires, collection, compilation, dissemination and data exchange methodologies and related training and capacity building. The UNCEEA welcomed the proposal of the IWG-ENV that it will provide its programme of work to the Bureau for consultation to ensure common vision and direction and no overlap in activities.

## **Agenda Item 6 – UNCEEA Programme of work: Paper prepared by the UNSD**

### **Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Reiterated that the SEEA revision remains the highest priority for the UNCEEA*
- *Expressed general support for the subsystem standards for Water, Energy and MFA provided that they apply and further elaborate the overall SEEA framework and their value added is clear and do not distract resources from the SEEA revision*
- *Requested UNSD to revise the paper on the programme of work and submit it to the UNCEEA Bureau and the UNCEEA. The paper should:*
  - (a) *Include revised text on the mandate*
  - (b) *Provide a list of outputs and outline priorities*

- *Noted with interest the proposal of FAO to include SEEA-Agriculture and Rural Development covering the impacts of agriculture on the environment in the work programme of the UNCEEA*

28. The UNCEEA discussed the proposed programme of work for the Committee. The programme covers six areas: Coordination; Methodological development for normative standards and other research; Development of integrated databases; Implementation; Promotion; and Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues.

29. The UNCEEA welcomed the proposal and reiterated that over the next four years, the SEEA revision and its elevation to an international statistical standard remains the highest priority. It further requested the Secretariat to ensure that the revised text on the mandate be reflected in the paper on the programme of work. It requested that the agencies responsible for delivering the output be clearly identified.

30. The UNCEEA expressed general support for the development of subsystem standards for Water, Energy, and Material Flows, provided that they apply and further elaborate the overall SEEA framework, their value-added is clear and do not distract resources from the SEEA revision. Some members raised doubts about the need and timeliness for the SEEA-MFA. In response to this, the Secretariat will prepare a note outlining the decisions of the UNCEEA.

31. Specific suggestion of additional outputs included the preparation of SEEA-Agriculture and Rural Development, covering the impacts of agriculture on the environment in the medium to long terms by FAO. Further, OECD and Eurostat offered to contribute to the “glossy publication” on Material Flow Accounts.

32. The UNCEEA requested UNSD to prepare a revised draft of the programme of work based on the discussion at the UNCEEA meeting for discussion by the Bureau prior to its submission to the UNCEEA.

### **Agenda Item 7 – Revision of the SEEA**

#### ***Progress report London Group on Environmental Accounting: Paper prepared by the Chair of the London Group***

##### **Outcome and actions:**

- *The UNCEEA took note of the paper*

##### **Summary of discussion:**

33. The UNCEEA welcomed the progress report from the London Group, and noted that the group has made considerable progress in resolving issues relevant to Volume 1 of the SEEA. Two issues remain unresolved: classifications relating to land and soil and valuation issues in measuring land degradation. A proposal on the way forward for the classification of land was discussed by the UNCEEA (see below). The classification of soil may be still uncertain and may need to be addressed in Volume 2. The UNCEEA asked the group on valuation to consider the economic impact of land degradation as high priority in its programme of work.

#### ***Draft annotated outline Volume 1: Paper prepared by Peter Comisari***

##### **Outcome and actions:**

- *The UNCEEA took note of the high level order outline and recommended that the London Group reviews the outline and develops an agreed outline*

**Summary of discussion:**

34. The UNCEEA discussed a draft outline for Volume 1 of the revised SEEA prepared by Peter Comisari, the interim editor of the revised SEEA. The outline is a work-in-progress to be submitted to the London Group for comments. The UNCEEA agreed in general with the process outlined in the paper which involves consultation with the London Group. It further suggested that a section on the research agenda as well as an Annex detailing changes from the SEEA-2003 be added to the outline. The need for coherence among macro-economic frameworks across all parts of the SEEA was also stressed.

***Valuation of ecosystem benefits and damages – Paper prepared by the World Bank***

**Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Acknowledged with appreciation the World Bank leading role in developing Volume 2 of the revised SEEA*
- *Requested that the World Bank engages UNEP to contribute on the development of ecosystem classifications and to the valuation of ecosystem services building upon the experience of TEEB and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*
- *Requested that the valuation of land degradation be considered a high priority for the group on valuation for possible inclusion in Volume 1*

**Summary of discussion:**

35. The UNCEEA discussed the proposal on addressing the valuation of ecosystem benefits and damages in the SEEA Volume 2 prepared by the World Bank. A small group consisting of interested international agencies and countries led by the World Bank was established to develop a detailed proposal for discussion at the London Group meeting in November. The Committee welcomed the World Bank leading role in the development of Volume 2 and agreed with the general approach proposed. It also acknowledged the offer from UNEP to work on the development of ecosystem accounts and ecosystem classifications based on the work being done in TEEB. It noted that economic valuation based on loss of ecosystem benefits may need to be supplemented with information on costs of the physical maintenance of ecosystems for some policy purposes.

***Land cover and land use classifications: Paper prepared by EEA and FAO***

**Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Agreed with the proposal to build land use classification based on the FAO land use classification for agriculture, forestry and fisheries and the UNECE land use classification for other land use*

- *Agreed with the proposal to build the classification of land cover based in LCCS and Corine Land Cover and stressed the importance that these classifications be included in Volume 1*
- *Requested EEA and FAO to prepare a paper with a proposal for the land cover and land use classifications for discussion at the next London Group meeting in November 2009.*

**Summary of discussion:**

36. The European Environment Agency made a presentation on Land Cover and Land Use Classifications and changes in land cover in the SEEA. The UNCEEA agreed with the proposal to build the land use classification based on the FAO land use classification in agriculture forestry and fisheries and complement it with the UNECE land use classification for other land use. It further agreed to build the classification of land cover based on LCCS and Corine Land Cover. The classification of the types of land cover changes could be built starting from the experience of land cover accounts in Europe. The UNCEEA discussed whether the land classifications should be included in Volume 1 and 2. It considered it important that land use and land cover classifications be included in Volume 1 taking also into consideration the link between the SEEA and the SNA land accounts. It urged the EEA and FAO to continue their work and prepare an issue paper with a clear proposal for the land use and land cover classifications for the next London Group meeting in November 2009.

***Timeline and process for the revision of the SEEA – Paper prepared by UNSD***

**Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Urged the interim editor to start drafting chapters immediately, based on outcome papers from the London Group, the existing text of the SEEA and the text of the SEEA-Water, SEEA-Energy and SEEA-MFA*
- *Agreed to establish a technical group to assist the editor in reviewing and commenting on the draft chapters and taking decisions on controversial issues. The Group would consist of technical experts from those countries and agencies members of the Bureau of the UNCEEA, technical experts from the agencies that are expected to sign off the revised SEEA, and technical experts from other agencies who might be needed to provide expertise in a particular area.*
- *Stressed the importance of giving the experts in the group the necessary time to carry out the review*

**Summary of discussion:**

37. The UNCEEA approved a detailed timeline for the drafting of the revised SEEA, noting that the timetable for Volume 1 and the parts of Volume 3 directly related to Volume 1 is very tight. It urged the interim editor to start drafting chapters immediately, based on outcome papers from the London Group, the existing text of the SEEA and the text of the SEEA-Water, SEEA-Energy and SEEA-MFA.

38. With regard to the process, the UNCEEA agreed that the Bureau as delegated by the UNCEEA will oversee the process of revising the SEEA. Furthermore, the UNCEEA considered it necessary to establish a technical group that would assist the editor in reviewing, commenting on the draft chapters and taking decisions on controversial issues. Different options on the composition of the technical group were discussed. The UNCEEA recommended that the technical group consist of technical experts from those countries and agencies member of the Bureau of the UNCEEA and technical experts from the agencies that are expected to sign off the revised SEEA, and technical experts from other agencies who might be needed to provide expertise in a particular area. The UNCEEA stressed the importance of giving the experts in the technical group the necessary time to carry out this assignment as a regular part of their work programme.

#### ***Funding situation for the project - Revision of the SEEA***

##### **Outcome and actions:**

- *The UNCEEA requested the Bureau to proceed with the recruitment of the editor for the revised SEEA, and to launch the search for an editor*

##### **Summary of discussion:**

39. The UNCEEA noted with satisfaction that the funding situation for the project has improved considerably, allowing work on the SEEA revision to proceed. At the last meeting of the UNSC both countries and international organizations expressed strong support for the revision of the SEEA and its elevation to a statistical standard, and many have pledged cash and in-kind contributions to the project. As a result, the Committee now has cash resources of about \$400,000. Several organizations have offered in-kind support, and others are considering contributions. The UNCEEA requested the Bureau to proceed with the recruitment of the editor for the revised SEEA, and launch the search for an editor.

#### **Agenda Item 8 – Linking Agricultural Statistics to Environment Statistics – Paper prepared by FAO**

##### **Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA welcomed the proposal of FAO to:

- *Contribute to the development of the classification of land and forests in the short term*
- *Lead the development of SEEA-Agriculture and Rural Development in the medium term*

40. The UNCEEA welcomed the presentation of FAO on the link between agricultural and environmental statistics. It was pleased with FAO readiness to be actively engaged in the revision of the SEEA and coordinating with other groups within FAO considering the leading role on the collection and compilation of statistics on natural resources. In particular, in the short term, FAO would contribute to the development of the classification of land and forests. In the medium to longer term, FAO would take the lead in developing SEEA-Agriculture and Rural Development.

## **Agenda Item 9 – Implementation of the SEEA-Water: Paper prepared by UNSD and presentations prepared by the JMP and GLAAS, WWAP, SGAB on Water and Sanitation, EEA and Eurostat, ECLAC and ESCWA**

### **Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Supported the preparation of a “glossy publication” on water accounting jointly by WWAP and UNSD, the establishment of a network of experts and the development of standardized training modules*
- *Recognized the need to support countries with technical assistance to improve the availability and quality of data at the country level and the need for improved coordination of international activity*
- *Requested OECD to ensure that the planned revision of the water statistics questionnaire to be undertaken in collaboration with international partners and the ISWG-Environment Statistics be aligned to the maximum extent possible with existing standards, namely the SEEA and the soon to be completed IRWS*
- *Requested that a proposal for establishing a working group to address the issue of data availability in countries to be submitted to the UNCEEA Bureau*

### **Summary of discussion:**

41. The UNCEEA welcomed the report on the implementation of the SEEA (UNCEEA/4/16) and congratulated the countries, the regional commissions, EEA and UNSD on the progress made over the past year. In particular, the UNCEEA was pleased with the progress on the implementation of water accounting in countries and the active involvement of the regional commissions and programmes (i.e. Medstat). It also noted the good progress made in the drafting of the International Recommendations for Water Statistics

42. The Committee was appreciative of the level of engagement with the global water community and welcomed to the meeting representatives from the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board (SGAB) on Water and Sanitation, UN-Water, WHO/UNICEF, and the World Water Assessment Programme for the discussion of this agenda item.

43. In response to the paper and the questions posed, UNCEEA supported the “glossy” publication on water accounting, the establishment of a network of experts and the development of standardized training modules. The Committee also noted the need for training materials to be available in languages other than English and that in some cases simplified materials and methods should be available for low income countries.

44. It was noted that the issue of certification was already being addressed in a separate UNSC process, and hence did not need to be taken up by UNCEEA at this time. It was recognized that in this case the issue of certification was related to data quality and that this should be addressed by a data quality assessment framework.

45. On the international data collections and data availability, the UNCEEA recognized that there were many data gaps and deficiencies at the national and international levels, particularly with the economic data on the water supply and sewerage industries. It was

recognized that to address these issues countries need to be supported with technical assistance and there has to be an improvement in the coordination of international activity in order to meet the needs of global data users.

46. The Committee also noted that the ISWG on Environment Statistics had reviewed the UNSD/UNEP and OECD/Eurostat Water Questionnaires in the past and that relatively little needed to be done to harmonize with the SEEAW and IRWS. It was further noted that existing water questionnaires were already long and complex and that the addition of data items could be problematic. The OECD informed the Committee that they were currently reviewing and restructuring their questionnaire and data collection process, with a view to better support policy work, fill the gaps and reduce the reporting efforts. The UNCEEA requested the OECD to ensure that the revised questionnaire is aligned to the maximum extent possible with the existing standards, namely the SEEA-Water and soon to be adopted International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS)

47. The UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, UN-Water, WHO/UNICEF, and the World Water Assessment Programme all supported the need for greater coordination at the international level and for the UNCEEA to become more involved in addressing the problems with water data at the national and international levels. The UNCEEA acknowledged the need for greater coordination and collaboration, particularly with the water community, and asked UNSD to prepare a more detailed proposal for the working group mentioned in the paper (UNCEEA/4/16). The proposal should be submitted to the Bureau for consideration.

## **Agenda Item 10 – Progress of work on manuals and other publications**

### ***International Recommendations for Energy Statistics: Paper prepared by UNSD***

#### **Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Urged that the preparation of IRES and the SEEA-Energy be done in close cooperation in order to ensure maximum extent possible coherence between the two standards, including their scope*
- *Requested that the issues identified in the report UNCEEA/4/23a be addressed with the highest priority*

#### **Summary of discussion:**

48. A paper on the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics was reviewed by the UNCEEA. The Committee urged that the preparation of IRES and the SEEA-Energy be done in close cooperation in order to ensure maximum extent possible coherence between the two standards, including their scope. It requested that the issues identified in the report UNCEEA/4/23a be addressed with the highest priority.

*SEEA-Energy – Paper prepared by UNSD*

#### **Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Recommended that the energy-related emission accounts be presented as an application of the SEEA-Energy to show that the derivation of energy-related air emission accounts from the energy accounts is a very simple exercise*
- *Tentatively supported the proposal of having a separate publication on air emission accounts but requested the UNSD to provide the Bureau with specific plans for its consideration*

**Summary of discussion:**

49. The Committee welcomed a report on the progress of the SEEA-Energy. The paper identified several issues for which the SEEA-Energy would require input from IRES.

50. The UNCEEA discussed the possibility of preparing a separate publication on Air Emissions accounts rather than including them in the SEEA-Energy. The UNCEEA recommended that the energy-related emission accounts be presented as an application of the SEEA-Energy to show that the derivation of energy-related air emission accounts from the energy accounts is a very simple exercise. It considered useful to have a separate publication on air emission accounts.

*SEEA-MFA – Paper prepared by UNSD*

**Outcome and actions:**

- *UNSD offered to prepare a short note describing the value added of the SEEA-MFA and summarize the decisions of the UNCEEA at the previous meetings*
- *The UNCEEA urged UNSD to work in close cooperation with Eurostat and OECD*

**Summary of discussion:**

51. UNCEEA welcomed a report on the progress of the manual on material flows in the SEEA. Some UNCEEA members raised the question of the value-added and timeliness of a new SEEA-MFA considering that the OECD guidance document covers related issues. It was noted that the OECD document is not a standard and that the UNCEEA in previous meetings requested UNSD to work in close cooperation with OECD and Eurostat to solve outstanding methodological issues and prepare a standard on MFA. UNSD offered to prepare a short note describing the value added of the SEEA-MFA and summarize the decisions of the UNCEEA at the previous meetings.

**Agenda Item 11 – Reports of groups working within the scope of the mandate of the UNCEEA**

**Outcome and actions:**

- *The UNCEEA requested UNECE to coordinate its work on the survey on climate change statistics activities of national statistical offices with UNSD and undertake the survey as part of Phase 2 of the Global Assessment of Environment Statistics and Environmental-Economic Accounting being undertaken under the auspices of the UNCEEA*

- *The UNCEEA requested UNECE to coordinate its activities on climate change with UNSD*

52. In the interests of time, the Chairman of the Committee asked that these information reports be read by Committee members on their own. Any comments on the report should be sent to the Secretariat

### **Agenda Item 12 – Other**

#### **Outcome and actions:**

The UNCEEA:

- *Agreed with the Chair's proposal that the Bureau in consultation with the Secretariat would prepare a proposal for consideration by the UNCEEA for the composition of the UNCEEA and its Bureau*
- *Urged the Secretariat to make available the papers for discussion as a minimum 2 weeks and preferably one month ahead of the meeting to ensure an in-depth discussion of the issues*
- *Suggested that the next meeting of the UNCEEA take place in the week of 23-25 June 2010*

53. The Chair of the UNCEEA noted that the UNCEEA had completed three years of work. According to the current terms of reference, the duration of the UNCEEA membership is 3 years, however the process for reviewing the membership is not explicitly discussed. A process needs to be established for this.

## Annex I Time schedule and tasks

The table below outlines the detailed time schedule agreed at the Third Meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and the tasks of countries and organizations.

	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Countries/ organizations</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1.	Develop a strategy paper on climate change	Bureau UNCEEA	December 2009
2.	Promoting the SEEA beyond the statistical community	UNDP	On-going
3.	Draft paper on the green economy and the associated statistical questions	UNEP in consultation with other agencies	December 2009
4.	Coordinate participation of experts in Green Economy groups	UNSD	As needed
5.	Draft “glossy publication” on the contribution of the SEEA to sustainable production and consumption	UNEP and DEFRA	To be discussed
6.	Revise paper on governance, mandate and terms of reference	Bureau UNCEEA	October 2009
7.	Revise mandate ISWG-Environment Statistics	ISWG-ES	October 2009
8.	Share the programme of work Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (ISWG-ES) with the UNCEEA	ISWG-ES	When available
9.	Agreed outline revised SEEA	London Group	November 2009
10.	Develop detailed proposal for Volume 2 for discussion by the London Group	World Bank	November 2009
11.	Valuation of land degradation for discussion by the London Group	World Bank	November 2009
12.	Develop a proposal for classifications of land use and land cover for discussion by the London Group	EEA and FAO	November 2009
13.	Start drafting of the SEEA chapters	Interim Editor	As soon as possible
14.	Follow progress on outstanding issues in the revision of the SEEA	Bureau UNCEEA	On-going
15.	Recruitment of the editor	Bureau UNCEEA	As soon as possible
16.	Establishment of a technical group to review draft chapters and take decisions on controversial issues	Bureau UNCEEA	As soon as possible
17.	Draft “glossy publication” on water accounting	UNSD and WWAP	May 2010
18.	Proposal on the establishment of a working group to strengthen water statistics and accounting programmes in countries	UNSD and WWAP	October 2009
19.	Review of water statistics questionnaire	OECD and ISWG-ES	December 2009

20.	Address those issues needed for the SEEA and SEEA-Energy as a priority in the preparation of IRES	Oslo Group/InterEnerStat	September 2010 February 2010
21.	Discuss the drafting of a separate document on air emission accounts	Bureau UNCEEA	
22.	Draft a short note describing the value added of the SEEA-MFA	UNSD	As soon as possible
23.	Global Assessment for Air Emission Statistics and Accounting	UNSD in coordination with regional commissions	March 2010
24.	Review composition of UNCEEA and its Bureau	Chair/Secretariat and Bureau	As soon as possible

## **Annex II      Organization of work**

### **Wednesday, 24 June 2009**

*Registration of participants (9:30-10:00) – Millennium Hotel*

*Morning Session (10:00 – 1:00)*

1. Opening of the meeting
  - a. Opening statement by Paul Cheung, Director, United Nations Statistics Division
  - b. Opening remarks by Peter Harper, Chair UNCEEA and Australian Deputy Statistician
  - c. Adoption of the agenda (UNCEEA/4/1)
  - d. Opening remarks by Verle van de Weerd, Director Environment and Energy Group, BDP UNDP
2. Nexus of economic growth, development and environment (*for information/discussion*)
  - a. Climate Change (Organized by UNDP)
    - National Inventories of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Yamil Bonduki, UNDP -UNCEEA/4/P1)
    - Bali Roadmap, Climate Change and Official Statistics (Maria Netto UNDP -UNCEEA/4/P2)

*Afternoon Session (2:30 – 5:30)*

2. Nexus of economic growth, development and environment (Cont'ed)
  - b. Green Economy, Resource Productivity, The Economics of Ecosystem Services (organized by UNEP)
    - Green Economy Initiative and Global Green New Deal (Fulai Sheng-UNEP – UNCEEA/4/P5)
    - The Economics of Ecosystem Services (Haripiya Gundimeda on behalf of UNEP – UNCEEA/4/P3)
    - Resource Efficiency and Resource Productivity (Guido Sonnemann UNEP-Division of Technology, Industry and Economics on behalf of the Panel for Resource Efficiency and Resource Productivity – UNCEEA/4/P4)

*Reception hosted by the United Nations Statistics Division*

## Thursday, 25 June 2009

### *Morning Session (10:00 – 1:00)*

3. Frameworks of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Environment Statistics
  - a. Dutch environmental accounts (Statistics Netherlands)
  - b. A Framework for Developing Environment Statistics (Statistics Canada)
  - c. Natural Resources Accounting for Forestry Sector- A Case Study (Indian Statistical Institute)

### *Afternoon Session (2:30 – 6:00)*

4. Governance, mandate, terms of reference of the Committee (*for decision*)– Paper prepared by the UNSD (UNCEEA/4/5)
5. Review of mandate of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics (*for discussion*) - Paper prepared by the ISWG-Environment Statistics (UNCEEA/4/14)
6. Programme of work UNCEEA (*for discussion*) - Paper prepared by the UNSD (UNCEEA/4/6)
7. Revision of the SEEA
  - a. Progress Report London Group (*for discussion*) – Paper prepared by the Chair of the London Group (UNCEEA/4/7)
  - b. Draft Annotated outline Volume 1 revised SEEA (*for discussion*) – Paper prepared by Peter Comisari (UNCEEA/4/8)
  - c. Valuation of ecosystem benefits and damages in the SEEA: Progress report (*for discussion*) –Paper prepared by the World Bank (UNCEEA/4/9)
  - d. Land Cover and Land Use Classifications in the SEEA Revision (*for discussion*) – paper prepared by the European Environment Agency and FAO (UNCEEA/4/11)
  - e. Timeline and Process for the Revision of the SEEA (*for discussion*) – Paper prepared by UNSD (UNCEEA/4/12)
  - f. Funding Situation for the Project - Revision of the SEEA (*for discussion*) – Paper prepared by the UNSD (UNCEEA/4/13)

## Friday, 26 June 2009

### *Morning Session (9:30 – 1:00)*

8. Linking agricultural statistics to environment statistics (*for discussion*) – Paper/presentation prepared by FAO (UNCEEA/4/15)
9. Implementation of the SEEAW – Current status and way forward (*for discussion*)
  - a. Implementation of the SEEAW – Paper prepared by UNSD (UNCEEA/4/16)
  - b. Joint Monitoring Programme (UNCEEA/4/17a) and UN-Water Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) (UNCEEA/4/17b) – Presentations prepared by UNICEF and WHO
  - c. Outcome of the deliberation of the Expert Group on Monitoring, Indicators and Databases, including the way forward – Paper/presentation prepared by the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) (UNCEEA/4/18)
  - d. Regional activities
    - i. Europe – Presentations prepared by the European Environment Agency (UNCEEA/4/19)
    - ii. Latin America and Caribbean Region – Paper/presentation prepared by ECLAC (UNCEEA/4/20)
    - iii. Developing Water Accounts for the Arab-ESCWA Region – Paper/presentation prepared by ESCWA (UNCEEA/4/21)

### *Afternoon Session (2:30 – 6:00)*

10. Progress of work on manuals and other publications
  - a. International Recommendations for Energy Statistics (*for discussion*) – Paper prepared by UNSD (UNCEEA/4/22)
  - b. SEEA-Energy: Progress Report (*for discussion*) - Paper prepared by UNSD (UNCEEA/4/23a) and Reflection Group on Energy Accounts (*for discussion*) – Paper prepared by Eurostat (UNCEEA/4/23b)
  - c. SEEA-MFA: Drafting Process (*for discussion*) – Paper prepared by UNSD (UNCEEA/4/24)
11. Reports of groups working under the auspices of the UNCEEA
  - a. Report of the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics (*for information*) (UNCEEA/4/25)
  - b. 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the London Group on Environmental Accounting - Report of the Meeting (*for information*) – Paper prepared by the London Group (UNCEEA/4/26)
  - c. Work on material flows and resource productivity (*for information*) – OECD (UNCEEA/4/27)

- d. Outcome of the work of the Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development and the creation of a new TF for Measuring Sustainable Development (*for information*) – Paper prepared by UNECE secretariat (UNCEEA/4/28)
- e. Joint Task Force of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy and the CES on Environmental Indicators in the CIS Countries TO Further Strengthen Environmental Reporting (*for information*) – Paper prepared by UNECE secretariat (UNCEEA/4/29)
- f. Plans for Undertaking Work on Statistics on Climate Change under the Auspices of the Conference of European Statisticians (*for information*) – Paper prepared by UNECE secretariat (UNCEEA/4/30)
- g. OECD-Eurostat Task Force – Emission Permits in the National Accounts (*for information*) – Eurostat and OECD (UNCEEA/4/31)

12. Other

13. Conclusions

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