MINUTES OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE SEEA EEA INDICATOR WORKING GROUP

2 December 2020, Zoom
Meeting minutes

- **Present:** Bhanumati (MOSPI India, chair); Francois Soulard (Statistics Canada); Shi Faqi (NBS China); Alvarado Quesada Irene (BCCR, Costa Rica); Etjih Tasriah (BPS, Indonesia); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Gerhardt Bouwer (Statistics South Africa); Rocky Harris (DEFRA, UK); Simon Ferrier (CSIRO Australia); Jillian Campbell and Kieran Noonan Mooney (CBD Secretariat); Trond Larsen (Conservation International); Anton Steurer (Eurostat); Kim Friedman (FAO); Mike Gill and HyeJin Kim (GEOBON Secretariat); Thomas Brook (IUCN), Katia Karousakis and Myriam Linster (OECD); Steven King (UNEP-WCMC); Alessandra Alfieri, Elsa Begne De Larrea, Jessica Chan, Julian Chow, Bram Edens and Marko Javorsek (United Nations Statistics Division); Carl Obst (UNSD consultant)

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

1) The objective of the meeting was to advance the discussion on indicator selection from each of the core accounts for the finalization of Chapter 14 of the SEEA EA. UNSD provided an overview of the status of Chapter 14 and introduced the discussion questions.

Scope

2) The following proposals were suggested as pathway forward on the scope of the chapter based on initial feedback received from the SEEA EA Forum on indicators:
   a) **Thematic account indicators:** The detail on specific indicators from thematic accounts will be included in Chapter 13 but a general discussion on indicators from a thematic perspective could be integrated into Section 14.4
   b) **Links to reporting framework**: The core text for this section is suggested be general and limited to using SDG, post-2020 biodiversity, climate change (UNFCCC) and land degradation (UNCCD) frameworks as examples. Other reporting initiatives (e.g. RAMSAR) could be mentioned but not to be discussed in detail. Such detail is likely best included in another reference document.
   c) **Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators**: the GBF monitoring framework as well as SDGs cover several headline indicators that could potentially be linked to the SEEA EA accounts. Emphasis in chapter 14 is to showcase the relevance of SEEA for reporting on to different frameworks
   d) **Extension of the scope:** It was noted that the following types of indicator were missing in Chapter 14, which were considered as policy relevant on their own rights. A proposal is to have an additional sub-section on integrated accounts to address these gaps
      i) Pressure indicators on ecosystem

       ii)   Indicators from the sequence of accounts

      iii) Expenditure related indicators

      iv) Indicators that integrate/combine various SEEA accounts

      v)   Indicators based on the application of the accounts, such as ecosystem footprint

3) There was general support on the above proposal, noting the following:

   a) Although chapter 13 provides description on thematic accounts, the focus of text may not be geared toward the compilation of indicators. It was suggested that additional descriptions should be placed in relevant sections of chapter 13 to ensure that the discussion on thematic accounts indicators are covered in chapter 13.

   b) Considering the GBF monitoring framework is still under development, rather than being prescriptive, it was suggested that the chapter should focus on elaborating the linkage on how SEEA EA could potentially be linked to the proposed GBF Goals and Targets.

   c) The chapter could also provide an opportunity to showcase how dataset/variables could be integrated into the accounting framework for the compilation of indicators

   d) The importance of extending the scope of the chapter to cover the above-mentioned other type indicators as listed in paragraph 2d was stressed.

Ecosystem extent

4) Discussion on natural ecosystem:

   a) The determination on natural vs anthropogenic ecosystem was considered relevant and it was suggested that the chapter could potentially address this issue

   b) It was suggested that the starting point to address this issue is by identifying the relevant class in IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology that are considered as natural.

5) Discussion on historical extent and opening period:

   a) It was agreed that the focus should be on the measurement of changes between closing and opening stocks and the associated percentage change although reference to an historical reference period could be also discussed but not prescribed.

6) Protected area

   a) The danger to include protected area coverage as a core extent indicator was noted considering such indicator may not provide the right signal. It was suggested that the discussion on protected areas could be placed in chapter 13 or under the related-international initiative in chapter 14.

   b) It was suggested that indicators based on overlaying protected area with ecosystem extent maps may provide better indicators for protected areas

Ecosystem condition

7) On the proposal to include GBF indicators related to ecosystem condition in the indicator list, it was noted that headline indicators are still under discussion and therefore difficult to choose the

indicators. It was suggested that the focus on the section should be on the elaboration of the SEEA EA linkage with possible indicators, including those that cannot be directly related to the condition accounts without being prescriptive. The importance of such elaboration was noted to demonstrate the relevant of SEEA EA in the current discussion of the global monitoring framework

8) As for the suggested approach on identification of condition indicators:
   a) There was support from members on the proposal to identify a limited set of indicators for each of the ecosystem condition typology class (i.e. physical state, chemical state, compositional state, structural state, functional state, landscape, seascape). It was considered important, noting that further effort is needed in order to come up with such proposal.
   b) It was noted that the chapter could provide explanation or point to relevant section in Ch.5 on how to use the underlying SEEA data in deriving the aggregate condition
   c) The importance to consider pressure indicators was noted. It was pointed out that pressure indicators are currently being used as a proxy in some countries where state indicators at the national level are missing.

Ecosystem services

9) The relevance of the SEEA EA for ecosystem services should be explained. It was suggested that physical measure for the various services could be subdivided this indicator by ecosystem type. Also, it was suggested to link the ecosystem services to SEEA Central Framework Account (e.g. expenditures, taxes, subsidies, etc.)

10) A suggested approach is to explore how the proposed services indicators could cross-reference with ecosystem type or combined/overlay with other core accounts from SEEA CF and EA to derive combined indicators. It was also suggested that this section could provide explanation of the complementarity of SEEA EA in supporting the relevant targets in the post-2020 framework

Monetary indicators

11) The 3 proposed indicators were considered relevant with strong policy demand. It was noted that the interpretation of these indicators should be clearly. The description on the scope and definition on Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP) and degradation should be mentioned in relevant section in the valuation chapter as well as in chapter 14.

12) On whether the proposed indicators should be expressed as absolute measures and relative measures, as well as for scope of degradation, it was suggested that the focus of the chapter is to provide an overview of options without making a definite recommendation.

13) With respect to the implementation, it was noted that countries may not yet be able to produce all of these indicators, especially the aggregates. In addition, considering that GEP is the total of all

ecosystem services and that countries compile only selected services which may not reflect the total of services produced, thus making the comparability of GEP across countries an issue.

14) Specific suggestions by members during the meeting:
   a) Relative importance of different ecosystem services (e.g. total regulating services as a % of GEP)
   b) Ratio of asset value to service value
   c) Change in GEP in constant price

Hybrid/Combined/Integrated indicators

15) In general, there was general support to extend the scope to cover indicators from sequence of accounts, expenditure, combined presentation and application-type indicators such as ecosystem footprint. Pressure indicators and socio-economic indicators were also suggested to be considered in the chapter.

Next step

16) Members are invited to send their comments on discussion papers and Chapter 14 to support the drafting process to UNSD by 9 December, after which the SEEA EA Editor, Carl Obst, will revise Chapter 14 based on input from working group members and comments received from the global consultation process by early January 2021.