



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS



System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

Working Group on SEEA EA Indicators

Terms of Reference

Introduction

COP15 will adopt at its next session in Kunming, China the post 2020 global biodiversity framework as well as a monitoring framework, which includes a set of indicators. To increase the accountability of Parties, there is a need for a common set of headline indicators that are harmonized and that can be disaggregated spatially and are nested. An organizing framework that brings together data from different sources into a common accounting framework with consistent definitions, classifications and accounting rules would provide a useful framework to underpin these headline indicators.

The approach of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) enables countries to adopt a holistic and integrated approach to develop sets of indicators to support the implementation, monitoring and reporting of sustainable development agenda and post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The United Nations Statistical Commission at its 51st Session in March 2020 “welcomed the background document on interlinkages and stressed the importance of the System of Environmental Economic Accounting for monitoring the Goals”¹. At the same session it “stressed the importance of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting in supplying a common measurement framework for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and related indicators that are currently being negotiated and are expected to be adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity”².

The UNCEEA has assessed that currently 40 indicators for nine SDGs can be informed by SEEA.³ A preliminary analysis undertaken by the United Nations Statistics Division indicates that SEEA can be used as an integrated framework to potentially monitor 27 out of 45 suggested indicators of the 2050 Goals, and 60 out of 147 of the 2030 targets indicators proposed in the draft monitoring framework accompanying the Zero draft of the global biodiversity framework⁴.

Ongoing effort is currently undertaken by the Technical Committee on the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA) under the auspices of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) to identify a core set of aggregates and indicators that can be derived from the SEEA as part of the SEEA EEA revision process. The revision process, expected to be completed with the submission of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA) to the UN Statistical Commission in March 2021, provides a window of opportunity for the statistical community to support the indicators framework for the post 2020 global biodiversity agenda.

In consideration of the above, a dedicated working group on indicators for the SEEA EA will be established under the Technical Committee on the SEEA EEA. The group will support further development of a core set of aggregates and indicators from the SEEA EA and its mainstreaming for the global indicator monitoring framework.

¹ E/2020/24, E/CN.3/2020/37, 51/101, para (g)

² E/2020/24, E/CN.3/2020/37, 51/110, para (c)

³ https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/sdg_cover_note_broadbrush.pdf

⁴ <https://www.cbd.int/api/v2013/documents/A5FDE4DF-ED6B-61CF-3190-891C442E1209/attachments/UNSD.pdf>

Objectives

The main objective of the working group is to support the SEEA EEA revision process and in particular the drafting of Chapter 14 of the revised SEEA EA. It will also support the identification of a list of aggregates and indicators derived from the SEEA EA for the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Governance

The Group is established under the Technical Committee of the SEEA EEA under the auspices of the UNCEEA and secretariat support from UNSD. The Technical Committee will review the work of the working group and may revise these terms of reference based on the work this group has completed and any new items that the UNCEEA would like this group to consider.

Membership and the chair

With the aim to seek broad agreement and consensus, the working group would be composed of experts on indicators and environmental-economic accounting. Members of the working group would include experts and negotiator from national governments and international organizations who will coordinate and engage as appropriate with institutions in their respective countries, organizations and networks.

The working group would be chaired by one of the members of the Subgroup for an initial period of 6 months up to 31st March 2021 to support the revision process, after that the existence of the Subgroup and its TOR will need to be reassessed. The role of the Chair would be to advance the work programme of the working group as set by the UNCEEA, as well as coordinate with other groups in the space, in particular the inter-governmental agency working group set up for the post-2020 and SDG process. UNSD will serve as the secretariat of the working group.