

UNCEEA WORKING GROUP ON COORDINATION (AREA A)

Background papers and resources

- [The Dasgupta Review](#) – Independent Review on the Economics of Biodiversity
- [Monitoring framework](#) of the CBD and indicators framework
- [Updated set of core climate change-related indicators and statistics](#), and its [implementation guidelines](#) and [metadata sheets](#), prepared for CES
- GIZ project – an [overview paper](#) and three issue papers on the policy applications of SEEA for [biodiversity](#), [climate change](#) and [macroeconomic issues](#)

Area A – developments in 2019-20 (see the Terms of Reference for Area A attached)

The Area A Working Group met one time in September 2019. The focus of the meeting at the time was to discuss the evaluation of the SEEA training material on the UN SEEA website; begin discussions to harness synergies amongst the various expert groups working on SEEA. In addition, the report of the Interlinkages Working Group of the IAEG-SDGs were discussed, as well as update on the CBD.

Group A has focussed on developing tools that can facilitate the discussion and coordination related to SEEA and environmental statistics:

Through the development of various tools and resources such as:

- Super calendar and collaborative workspace – A [super-calendar](#) that lists SEEA-relevant meetings and workshops around the globe as well as a [collaborative workspace](#) to share agendas, minutes and documents.
- Development of a knowledge base on SEEA publications – this is a [resource](#) that provides access to SEEA-related documents on a large number of topics searchable by subject, country, date etc.
- UN SEEA training material - Statistics Canada reviewed a number of training materials provided by UNSD, using the evaluation template that was developed by Area A. An evaluation of much of the material was done by experts within the Environment Accounts and Statistics Program using the template as a guide. At the same time, several comments on the usefulness of the template along with suggestions to improve the contents were provided to UNSD. In addition, Statistics Canada provided some talking points on how future reviews of the SEEA training material could take place.

Through contributions to mainstreaming the SEEA:

- Area A contributed to the report to the 51st session of the Statistical Commission on [Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), submitted by the IAEG-SDG Interlinkages Working Group.

Area E – developments in 2019-20

Area E's principal focus is on outreach and communication (see [communication strategy](#)).

- Support for the [SEEA News and Notes](#)
- Support the development of narratives based on country experiences
- Training UNCEEA members on communications

Area A renewal and merger with Area E

Greg Peterson, Assistant Chief Statistician, Economic Statistics Field, Statistics Canada recently agreed to lead the Area A Working Group, taking over the role of working group chair from André Loranger.

Area A and Area E propose to merge the responsibilities of Area E into Area A and seek the Committee's feedback and approval. This is an opportunity for the Working Group to review its mandate and focus, and to resume regular meetings. Given how strongly Area E's mandate to communicate the usefulness of SEEA to different audiences and to support the mainstreaming of the SEEA into policy links to the goals of Area A, this proposal makes sense.

Review of the Terms of Reference for Area A and Area E

If approved, the new Area A and E would like to review and update the Terms of Reference for Area A and Area E with the goal of merging the mandate of the two Working Groups into Area A. The original mandate of Area A can be found at the Annex at the end of this document, and the mandate of Area E can be found in the UNCEEA [communication strategy](#). Further discussions within the Working Group are needed to identify the path forward in the integration of the Area E responsibilities with Area A. It is also an opportunity to review the mandate of both groups. Area A welcomes the feedback of the Committee related to this proposal and also on the Terms of Reference. We also welcome the Committee's feedback on the proposed body of work for Area A in the short and medium term (2021-2025).

Possible areas of work:

Developing a broader framework for wellbeing and sustainability to fit better in the context of the COVID-19 recovery

The recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will require a broad set of metrics to ensure that actions taken are equitable and environmentally sustainable. The Advisory Expert Group on Economic accounts has already noted the need for guidance to provide clearer links between material wellbeing, including for example distributional measures, and broader issues of wellbeing and sustainability. A draft guidance note on Wellbeing and Sustainability will be available for consultation this summer, with contribution from several members of the UNCEEA.

Area A can play a role to contribute to this thinking, but also to examine short-term actions that can be taken to provide broad metrics on the recovery using the SEEA and creating links to SNA indicators. In this context, it can also examine the role that SEEA can play in the emerging area of sustainable finance.

Mainstreaming the SEEA

The Working Group has continued to work with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and with the working group on interlinkages of Sustainable Development Goals to promote the use of SEEA into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Working Group prepared a background document that examines the interlinkages between the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Sustainable Development Goals and the interlinkages between policy and legislation. It also includes case studies.

A programme of work for the upcoming year will investigate the role Area A can play in mainstreaming the use of the SEEA in the following areas:

- i) Biodiversity: The SEEA is well-positioned to support the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, particularly with the on-going review of the ecosystem accounts module. An assessment report from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre and United Nations Statistics Division shows that 61 of the current Aichi Target indicators are fully or partially aligned with the SEEA. Background documents on this topic have been provided.
- ii) Circular economy: An in-depth review of measuring the circular economy has been drafted by Statistics Finland (lead), National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, Statistics Canada, Statistics Netherlands, European Environment Agency, Eurostat, UNEP and OECD is currently being drafted. This report will discuss the scope and definitions used for the circular economy, and the various frameworks used. It also provides the information needs and measurement challenges related to

the circular economy, and provides an overview of international statistical activities by both a number of international organizations and country NSOs. The paper also includes details on issues and challenges related to measuring the circular economy, including measurement scope, definitions, data availability and fitness, classifications and communication and dissemination.

- iii) Climate change: On June 22, 2020, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) endorsed the outputs of the Task Force on Climate Change-related Statistics and Indicators. The documents include the *Updated Set of Core Climate Change-Related Indicators and Statistics Using the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting*, the implementation guidelines and the indicator metadata sheets. Thirty-six countries and three international organizations replied to the request for comments and supported the endorsement of the guide, subject to the response of the committee to the comments received. Area A is well positioned to support ongoing work in this area, including elevating the importance of SEEA-based climate change statistics and indicators.
- iv) Sustainable finance: How to mobilize financial markets to help drive sustainable development is being examined at the national and international levels. Can the SEEA provide data that will help the financial sector account for the importance of including the environment in business decision making and reporting? This was to be the topic of the postponed event in Yale 'Communicating the Path to Sustainability through Natural Capital Accounting. Work in this area could be used as a lead-up to the rescheduled event.

Relationships with other groups

The group could undertake a review of the Terms of Reference of the UNCEEA and other SEEA Governance Groups. At this year's meeting of the UNCEEA, we will be reviewing the working methods and membership of the UNCEEA to ensure that the Committee is functioning as effectively as possible. A wider analysis would be a logical next step, to ensure that the UNCEEA is harnessing synergies with other governance groups and not duplicating efforts.

Questions for the Committee

- What is the Committee's feedback on the proposal to merger Area A and Area E?
- In the review of the Terms of Reference for Area A/E, does the Committee have any comments or feedback on changes they recommend?
- Does the Committee have any comments or feedback on the body of work that Area A/E should focus on?
- How can Area A support elevating SEEA indicators to the same level as GDP in the context of monitoring the post-COVID recovery?
- What does the committee think of Area A's proposed role in the area of mainstreaming the SEEA?
- What should be the role of the NSO members of Area A, particularly in areas (such as biodiversity) where national leads tend to be assigned to policy ministries?

Annex: ToR of Area A

Mandate – UNCEEA working group on Coordination (Area A)

Area Lead: Statistics Canada

Members of the group: To be determined. Members should cover developed and developing countries and the leads of areas which have potential overlap and input into Area A (i.e. capacity building, communication)

Mandate

To foster collaboration, integration and complementarity of programmes relevant to environmental-economic accounting.

Objectives

Eurostat, OECD, World Bank and UNSD are the main international organizations working in the domain of environmental-economic accounting. In addition, several National Statistical Offices (NSO) are also involved in capacity-building either on their own or in partnerships with the international organizations or other NSOs. Furthermore, an increasing number of international agencies are developing concepts and statistical methods for emerging data and reporting initiatives in the area of environmental statistics. For these reasons, coordination is required to avoid response and other burdens on NSOs from competing demands on their resources, to help achieve aligned statistical methods, and to ensure that activities of the international organizations are complementary and resource-effective.

Specifically, there are several key areas of work included in the mandate of this group:

- Expanding use of SEEA in the development and reporting of indicators, on analysis, on decision-making
- Leveraging the use of training tools that have already produced in order to make them more readily accessible, and where necessary, to produce common tools to be used and disseminated widely

Areas of focus and deliverables

Reporting initiatives

The Working Group will work to ensure that SEEA guidelines are used as much as possible in the development of new international reporting initiatives, including initiatives such as the UNECE indicators on climate change and the SDG indicators. A lead within the working group for dealing with the SDG will be nominated, and will work in close collaboration with Area E.

Training and assistance

The existence of different training programs is not considered a problem, since different audiences will need different materials tailored to their specific needs. The result is that there are several sets of teaching and information materials available. The most important need is not to coordinate the development of these materials, but rather a need to make them all available in one place so that they are easy to find and accessible to both trainers and students. Where necessary, new tools might also need to be developed.

In addition, there is a need for international agencies and NSOs to be aware of the training efforts already completed and underway in order to avoid duplication and to provide background for subsequent assistance. This information will be developed by the working group and will be made available via the UNSD's new website, which will contain both static and interactive elements.

Timeline

The work group will be ongoing. A detailed work plan with timelines and deliverables will be drafted within the first three months of the first meeting of the group.

Meetings

Statistics Canada will act as chair to the working group. Meetings will be quarterly, and will take place by telephone and/or Webex, with possible side-meetings during the yearly plenary of the UNCEEA.