



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION  
UNITED NATIONS

---

**Twentieth Meeting of the United Nations Committee of  
Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting  
25-26 June 2025**

**Technical Committee on SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (Area B2):  
Summary of activities**

*Paper prepared by the Technical Committee on SEEA Ecosystem Accounting  
(for discussion)*

# TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON THE SEEA ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTING (AREA B2): SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

---

1. Since the adoption of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)—Ecosystem Accounting at the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2021, the Technical Committee on SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (Area B2) has been focusing primarily on supporting its implementation. The Technical Committee developed a programme of work for 2023-2025, based on the direction provided by the UNCEEA, which is centred around six main components. The Technical Committee is planning to review its work programme at the end of this year to reassess its priorities and develop a new work programme for the next period.

2. Section 2 reports on the activities of the Technical Committee on SEEA Ecosystem Accounting over the last year based on the programme of work and outlines future work in these areas. Section 3 highlights the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) project on biodiversity indicators and, finally, questions for the Committee are outlined in Section 4.

## 1 Update on the progress of work for the Technical Committee

3. In the past year, the Technical Committee continued to advance its work in line with the agreed work programme for 2023-2025. The six components of the programme of work of the Technical Committee for 2023-2025 are: (1) development of practical guidance notes for countries for the compilation of SEEA Ecosystem Accounting; (2) supporting the development of headline indicators for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) that are based on the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting; (3) overseeing the working groups on forest ecosystems and ocean accounting; (4) contributing to the broader SEEA and System of National Accounts (SNA) processes; (5) engaging with relevant initiatives; and (6) promoting the community of practice on ecosystem accounting.

### 1.1 Development of practical guidance notes for countries

4. The work programme recognized that further methodological guidance was needed to support countries' implementation of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, hence the Technical Committee undertook these activities with high priority, in particular related to: (a) operationalizing the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology; (b) approaches and methods for compiling ecosystem extent accounts; and (c) methods for measuring ecosystem services.

#### *(a) Operationalizing the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology*

5. Guidelines for classifying agricultural and plantation forestry ecosystems in the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology were developed by the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management in close collaboration with the Technical Committee. Agricultural and plantation forestry ecosystems are globally extensive and linked to economically important ecosystem services. The work to develop these guidelines was initiated and led by the IUCN and undertaken over the period January 2024 to March 2025, and will be published by the IUCN in 2025. A reference group guided the work, consisting of experts from the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management's network of scientists and experts of the Technical Committee.

6. The IUCN is also leading the development of standards, methods and guidelines for cross-referencing ecosystem classifications and maps to the Global Ecosystem Typology. These guidelines

were presented to the Technical Committee to collect feedback from members of the Technical Committee. In addition, guidelines for developing a national ecosystem map are under development, led by the Group on Earth Observations as part of the Global Ecosystems Atlas initiative. These will provide an important complementary resource to support the development of foundational data for national ecosystem accounting.

*(b) Approaches and methods for compiling ecosystem extent accounts*

7. With the adoption of the metadata for the GBF headline indicators by the Conference of Parties 16 (COP 16) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Technical Committee has started developing more detailed guidance on the compilation of the GBF headline indicators related to the SEEA, including indicator A.2 “Extent of natural ecosystems” as the indicator that is derived from ecosystem extent accounts, under the UNSD biodiversity indicator project (see below).

*(c) Methods for measuring ecosystem services*

8. The Technical Committee has worked on the development of an Ecosystem Services Accounting Compatibility Assessment Tool (ESA-CAT), which provides a set of systematic checks on underlying assumptions, approaches and methodologies for measurement of ecosystem services to evaluate their consistency with the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting. The tool is intended primarily to support compilers of ecosystem services accounts as they embark on the process. The development of this tool started in 2024, with support from the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre, and was discussed several times in the Technical Committee, it also underwent testing with countries and experts and is currently in the final phase of development.

## 1.2 Supporting the development of metadata for the headline indicators for GBF

9. In 2024, the Technical Committee oversaw the development of the metadata of the headline indicators of the GBF related to the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, i.e., indicator A.2 “Extent of natural ecosystems” based on ecosystem extent accounts and indicator B.1 “Services provided by ecosystems” based on ecosystem services accounts, which were submitted in March 2024 to the CBD process for approval. CBD COP 16 welcomed the metadata as part of the monitoring framework for the GBF (see Decision 16/31 contained in [CBD/COP/DEC/16/31](#)) at the second resumed session in February 2025 in Rome.

10. Since the metadata were endorsed, the Technical Committee will now support the development of operational guidelines for the SEEA-related headline indicators, global tools and databases under the UNSD biodiversity indicator project (see below). In particular, it is proposed that the two Task Teams that were established to support the development of the metadata in 2024 will be merged into one to provide substantive input and expert review to the development of the compilation guidelines, global tools and databases.

11. It is planned, that over the rest of 2025 and in 2026, various drafts of the compilation guidelines will be developed for discussion and review by the Task Teams and the Technical Committee. Expert group meetings will also be organized to further discuss the technical aspects of the compilation guidelines that still need to be defined, such as, for example, recommendations on the selection of ecosystem services to be used for reporting and methods for deriving the indicators from accounting outputs. The compilation guidelines will undergo thorough expert review and in-country testing.

### 1.3 Working groups on forest ecosystems and ocean accounting

12. To advance implementation and further methodological development, the Technical Committee established two Working Groups (WGs) in 2021 on forest ecosystems and ocean accounting, to contribute to the advancement of the ecosystem accounts based on a review of best practices, methods, models, data, and tools, looking at both biophysical and monetary aspects, as well as examining policy entry points. However, given the update of the SEEA Central Framework and the resource constraints faced by several international and national organizations (including UNSD), the work of the two WGs has been, over the past year, slowed down and deprioritized. For the time being, these two WGs are thus dormant. They may be revitalized once resources are available.

13. The WG on forest ecosystems is co-chaired by Rey Juan Carlos University, Spain and Griffith University, Australia, and has around 23 members from several countries, organizations, and academic institutions. Over the last year, the WG discussed an outline for a technical note to provide guidance on how to identify forest ecosystems in the classifications of ecosystem types and explain the links with the relevant definition of forests from a land cover perspective, such as for example the concept of forest land in the FAO Forest Resource assessment. Once the note is further developed the WG will review and discuss it and submit it for review and approval by the Technical Committee.

14. The WG on ocean accounting is chaired by Australian Bureau of Statistics and has around 30 members from the environmental accounting, scientific and environmental economics communities from countries, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia. The WG continued working on a series of papers related to ocean accounting, finalizing the second paper on data structures and discussing the outline of the third paper on ecosystem services. The paper on data structures was also discussed and approved by the Technical Committee, whereas the paper on ecosystem services is being finalized with the support of GOAP. In addition, members of the WG, as individual experts, have provided their expert inputs on a set of draft ecosystem services guidance notes that were drafted by the IDEEA Group as part of a GOAP initiative to advance on ocean accounting. Draft notes on aquatic biomass, recreation-related services, and nursery and habitat services have been so far circulated for comments to WG members.

### 1.4 Contributions to the broader SEEA and System of National Accounts (SNA) processes

15. Under the fourth component of the work programme, the Technical Committee has been contributing to the broader SEEA and System of National Accounts (SNA) revision processes. During the revision of the SNA, the Technical Committee provided input in the discussion on several issues relevant to the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting, and also to the OECD Compilation Guide on Measuring Natural Resources in the National Accounts. With the adoption of the 2025 SNA by the Statistical Commission in March 2025, the involvement of the Technical Committee in the discussion related to the SNA will be no longer needed unless specific issues of interest arise.

16. The Technical Committee is closely engaged in the update of the SEEA Central Framework, in particular ensuring the alignment between Ecosystem Accounting and Central Framework. Progress on the SEEA Central Framework update is regularly presented at each meeting of the Technical Committee. The Technical Committee discussed issues of particular interest for the ecosystem accounting community and members of the Technical Committee have been invited to take part in the update Task Teams that were established.

17. Among the 29 issues that were identified for the SEEA Central Framework update, the following were identified as having significant links to SEEA Ecosystem Accounting:

- a) A1: Providing a broad overview of links between SEEA CF and SEEA EA
- b) A4: How SEEA CF accounts can be made spatially explicit
- c) A9: Consistency with the 2025 SNA revision issues
- d) B3: Treatment of carbon flows in the SEEA CF
- e) B7: Inclusion of residual flows to ecosystem type, i.e. pressure account
- f) D1: Inclusion of the carbon stock account
- g) D7: Valuation of water
- h) D8: Treatment of the atmosphere as an asset

18. Close coordination with the Technical Committee on SEEA Ecosystem Accounting is envisaged for the preparation of the guidance notes for the issues above. In addition, the Chair and several members of the Technical Committee on SEEA Ecosystem Accounting are active members of several Task Teams of the Technical Committee on SEEA on Central Framework to ensure close coordination.

### 1.5 Engagements with related initiatives

19. The Technical Committee will continue regular engagement with related groups and initiatives that are relevant to ecosystem accounting, in particular the IUCN, CBD, the Global Ecosystem Atlas of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), the European Space Agency (ESA), and others. This is done through coordination meetings of the Chair and UNSD with these initiatives, overlapping membership with their advisory or steering committees, if applicable, and presentations in the various meetings.

20. In recent meetings, the Technical Committee discussed the Global Ecosystems Atlas initiative led by GEO, the World Ecosystem Extent Dynamics (WEED) project led by ESA. The Technical Committee members noted the close connection between the various initiatives and the UNSD biodiversity indicator project, and encouraged closer collaboration to leverage on the various initiatives in a coordinated manner. In addition, UNSD is representing the SEEA community on both the Steering Board of the GEO Global Ecosystems Atlas initiative and the Advisory Board of the ESA WEED project.

### 1.6 Community of practice on ecosystem accounting

21. Lastly, the community of practice on ecosystem accounting is an aspirational goal to facilitate a closer network of experts on ecosystem accounting and, if possible, to organize events where this community could meet, in particular to organize a Forum of Experts on Ecosystem Accounting in the near future, which will be probably made possible under the UNSD project on biodiversity indicators.

## 2 UNSD project on biodiversity indicators

22. In October 2024, UNSD started a 2-year EU-funded project entitled “Monitoring Framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.” The overall objective of the project is to support countries to report on the SEEA-related indicators of the GBF Monitoring Framework by developing compilation guidelines and global tools and datasets for these indicators, with testing in the three project countries (Colombia, Indonesia and Uganda). Working with project countries from different regions will ensure the usability of the compilation guidelines by countries in different

contexts and by a range of stakeholders. Similarly, the global tools and datasets developed under the project will enable countries to compile accounts and relevant indicators, using the freely available ARIES for SEEA platform.

23. The project will be carried out in close collaboration with the Technical Committee as the project outputs will be submitted to the Technical Committee for review and approval.

### 3 Questions to the Committee

24. The Committee is invited to:

- 1) Express its views on the progress of work of the Technical Committee, as outlined above
- 2) Provide advice on the planned activities