

MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE UN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING

10 February, 2022 teleconference

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** Bert Kroese (UNCEEA Chair, Statistics Netherlands); Amanda Clark (Australia Bureau of Statistics); Carolyn Cahill, Jeff Fritzsche, Mariam Iqbal, Greg Peterson (Statistics Canada); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Neil Wilson (United Kingdom Office of National Statistics); Sven Kaumanns (Destatis, Germany and London Group on Environmental Accounting); P. Bhanumati (IMF); Roberto Astolfi, Sarah Barahona (OECD); Catherine Van Rompaey (World Bank); Alessandra Alfieri, Jessica Ying Chan, Julian Chow, Bram Edens (UNSD)
- **Regrets:** MOSPI (India), INEGI (Mexico), Philippine Statistical Authority, Statistics New Zealand, Statistics South Africa, Eurostat, ESCAP, FAO

1. UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION

- UNSD informed the Bureau that the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) will be virtual, from 28 February to 2 March and 4 March.
- Written statements are currently being accepted, with a soft deadline of 17 February 2022.
- Each agenda item has 25 minutes. The time on each agenda item will be strictly enforced to ensure that those delegates that plan to attend specific agenda items will be able to do so. Based on the written statements received, UNSD will invite a select number of countries to speak; these countries are expected to provide a balanced view on the agenda item. UNSD will update the Bureau on the selected speakers.
- The schedule and information on submitting written statements is posted on the UNSC website: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/53rd-session/>

2. REPORT TO THE UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION

- It is expected that the discussion on the Committee's agenda item will focus on the implementation strategy and the policy applications of the SEEA, particularly climate change and biodiversity (e.g. G20 Data Gap Initiative (DGI) and post-2020 global biodiversity framework), as well as implementation of the SEEA EA.
- It was suggested that countries/organizations highlight the role of the SEEA in the DGI and biodiversity in their interventions to highlight the statistical community's relevance and commitment to these initiatives.

3. CLASSIFICATIONS

- UNSD introduced a review of the documents for the agenda item on international statistical classifications (3v). The UNCEEA and SEEA Central Framework Technical Committee (SEEA CF TC) have had good collaboration over the past year with the Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications.
- A revised structure for ISIC will be presented during the Commission. Since the SEEA CF TC was involved at the tail end of the process, its suggestions to include climate mitigation and ecosystem restoration in the structure were not taken up because of concerns over data availability and the size of the Division.
- UNSD encouraged Bureau members to participate in the global consultation on the revised ISIC structure, which ends on Friday 18 February.
- The UNCEEA will have more room to influence the revision of the CPC, as it is just starting. In addition, a revision of the Standard International Energy Product Classification (SIEC) is being planned, potentially within the overall CPC revision process.
- COFOG will potentially be revised and presents an opportunity to better classify expenditures related to the environment. The Bureau may want to support the update of COFOG given its relevance in the SEEA
- The Bureau agreed on the importance of the SEEA CF TC staying involved in these revisions. In particular, the revision of SIEC and CPC presents an opportunity to create better alignment between the physical and monetary energy accounts.

4. SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

- UNSD introduced a review of the documents for the agenda item on the SNA (3n). The paper focuses on the revision of the SNA, the role of the SNA in creating a measurement framework for wellbeing and sustainability, as well as the relationship between the SEEA and SNA. It is expected that the updated SNA will better align with the SEEA by making the link between the environment and economy more visible.
- A formal collaboration agreement exists between the UNCEEA, the Intersecretariat of Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) and the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts (AEG) whereby there is cross participation of members of the SEEA group of the SNA Task Team on Well Being and Sustainability and the SEEA CF TC. Consultation on issues relevant to the SEEA community will be undertaken jointly under the auspices of the UNCEEA, ISWGNA and the AEG.
- A small group on valuation has also recently been formed. There was some concern that the objective and membership of the group focuses too narrowly on the SNA, without due consideration to the broader concerns of the SEEA community. The premise of the valuation group is to clarify the basic SNA principles of valuation also

in light of issues that have emerged as a result of the revision of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting.

- There was concern over whether people perceive the SEEA as a satellite account of the SNA, which has secondary status to the SNA. While most Bureau members did not feel this perception was widespread, it was acknowledged that it could potentially be helpful, from a communications perspective, to be clearer about the equal standing of the SEEA with the SNA.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE

- Statistics Netherlands introduced a review of the documents for the agenda item on climate change statistics (3m). The paper focuses on the adoption of the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators. Statistics Netherlands voiced concern about adopting this as a statistical framework, rather than a reference list, which it more closely resembles. In addition, Statistics Netherlands raised concerns over the absence of a clear review mechanism that should start immediately, particularly given the lack of review by the SEEA community.
- Bureau members agreed that the Global Set was more of a reference list rather than a statistical framework. They also voiced concern over the expectation to now compile a long list of indicators on climate change.
- It was noted that there is potential overlap between the DGI and the Global Set, and that mechanisms should be built to avoid duplication of effort on the part of both countries and international organizations.
- The topic of participation of developing countries in the Committee came up. While the Committee is regionally diverse, it was acknowledged that developing countries are not always vocal, particularly in a virtual setting and because of time difference rarely participate in the activities of the various groups. The Bureau agreed that it needed to better encourage developing countries to participate.

6. TOUR DE TABLE

- Area A is finalizing an assessment of different groups working on environmental economic accounting and related statistics which will help in the development of its detailed programme of work. Area A will focus on the thematic areas of climate change, biodiversity, circular economy and sustainable finance. To maximize the group's impact given limited resources, the group will hold a discussion on prioritization during the next meeting. However, it was noted that the group should also consider the need to take advantage of opportunities to promote the SEEA, as they arise.
- Area B1 is actively participating in the activities under the SNA revision and the revisions to international classifications.

- Area B2 is unfortunately in search of a new chair with the imminent retirement of Anton Steurer. The SEEA EA TC now has two subgroups, one on forest and one on ocean. The working group on indicators continues to meet and is currently focusing on drafting metadata for the indicators of the SEEA-related post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- Area C is holding regular meetings with two main focuses: land cover databases and data collection for air emissions and energy accounts. Progress has been made in both regards, with recent meetings on converging to a single land cover database and the creation of questionnaire templates for air emissions and energy accounts. Progress on producing quarterly air emission estimates by Eurostat and IMF was also noted, as was the OECD's progress in introducing maritime transport into its air emission methodology.
- The London Group on Environmental Accounting is collecting ideas for a draft agenda and hopes to have a more targeted/focused meeting this year which is less "show-and-tell". The London Group hopes to have the meeting in Bonn some time in late summer or early fall.
- Area D activities have focused on the recent 2021 Global Assessment on Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics, and the working group will call a meeting to discuss its workplan soon.
- Area E has held two meetings thus far, with good participation from both NSOs and the private sector. It is currently finalizing its work plan, which will focus on raising awareness of the SEEA and providing input from the statistical community on several upcoming sustainability standards.

7. AOB

- There are several SEEA-relevant side events of note:
 - UNSD/UNCEEA is organizing two side events:
 - Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, in collaboration with the CBD and EU on 21 February from 7:00 to 8:30 AM EST
 - [Closing Climate Change Data Gaps](#), in collaboration with the IMF on 23 February from 7:00 to 8:30 AM EST
 - A side event organized by ESCAP, [Measuring Progress Beyond GDP](#), has a strong SEEA component
 - [The Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators](#) organized by UNSD and the UNFCCC
- It was noted that the Bureau should organize a show of appreciation for Anton's work as Chair of Area B2 before he retires at the end of April.