

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

15 February 2023 teleconference

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** Gemma Van Halderen, Amanda Clark (Australian Bureau of Statistics); Augustine Akuoko-Asibey, Jeff Fritzsche, Mariam Iqbal, André Loranger (Statistics Canada); Sven Kaumanns (Destatis, Germany and London Group on Environmental Accounting); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Mandy Driver (SANBI, South Africa); Rosie Maslin, Ian Townsend (UK Office of National Statistics); Arturo de la Fuente (Eurostat); Paulo Lourenco Dias Nunes, Valentina Ramaschiello (FAO); Jim Tebrake (IMF); Roberto Astolfi, Sarah Barahona, Myriam Linster (OECD); Sokol Vako (ESCAP-SIAP); Alessandra Alfieri, Jessica Ying Chan, Julian Chow, Marinella Cirillo, Bram Edens (UNSD)
- **Regrets:** MOSPI India, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, INEGI-Mexico, Statistics New Zealand, Philippine Statistical Authority, SANBI-South Africa, World Bank

1. WELCOME FOR THE CHAIR

- The Bureau warmly welcomed Gemma Van Halderen of the Australian Bureau of Statistics as Interim Chair of the UNCEEA. Gemma will serve as Chair until the next UNCEEA meeting in June, during which the Committee will nominate a Chair for a full three-year term.

2. STATISTICAL COMMISSION

- UNSD introduced the tentative agenda for the Bureau Meeting taking place on the sidelines of the 54th Session of the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC). The meeting will take place with in-person delegates (mostly chief statisticians) and will be a strategic meeting. However, regular Bureau members can connect via the Teams link sent by UNSD to listen in.
- There was general support for the agenda, but it was suggested to streamline the agenda, given the time constraints. It was agreed to focus on the G20 Data Gaps Initiative (DGI), Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the update of the SEEA Central Framework and the SEEA community's involvement in the SNA revision (the latter presented by OECD). Given the audience, participants agreed that the presentation of issues should not be technical.
- The focus of the UNCEEA report is on SEEA implementation and mainstreaming into policy. Bureau members agreed that the meeting should highlight the main issues in the programme of work in the next year, including engaging with new initiatives such as the GBF monitoring framework and the new DGI.

- Participants shared details of four other SEEA-related side events (both virtual and in-person), and it was suggested that Bureau members encourage their organization's delegates to attend the upcoming in-person events as relevant:
 - 3 February (virtual, past): [Quarterly Greenhouse Gas Emission Estimates](#)
 - 16 February (virtual): [New Developments in International Statistical Classifications](#)
 - 27 February (in person): [High-level Forum on Official Statistics: Statistical Measures Beyond GDP](#)
 - 28 February (in person, organized by the UNCEEA and the Convention on Biological Diversity): [Monitoring the Kunming-Montreal GBF: The Role of Official Statistics](#)

3. DATA GAPS INITIATIVE

- The IMF provided a brief overview of the new DGI which was adopted in November 2022. Half of the 14 DGI recommendations are related to climate change, and the SEEA is the main framework being used for several of the climate change indicators.
- The DGI is led by an interagency group consisting of international organizations (including Bureau members –IMF, UNSD, OECD and Eurostat). Task Teams will drive forward the work on individual recommendations and will consist of members from international organizations and countries.
- The DGI plans to make use of the Committee's work. For example, recommendations 1 and 2 will use the global physical energy flow and air emission account templates developed by Area C.
- There are several capacity building events being planned; a list of workshops will be shared with the interagency group and others in mid-March. The IMF has also scheduled a global workshop on June 13 to 15 in Washington, DC.
- Members discussed the importance of involving other government agencies in the DGI, which may pose challenges in some countries. The IMF noted that since the DGI was endorsed by finance ministers and central bank governors, liaising with ministries of finance and central banks would be a good place to start.
- The IMF also offered to support countries with communicating the initiative and working across government. It was noted that the DGI is an important opportunity to further the SEEA implementation in countries, communicate the benefits of the SEEA to users and raise the profile of the SEEA.

4. GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

- UNSD and Statistics Canada provided a short briefing of COP-15, which saw the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal GBF and its monitoring framework. Ecosystem

extent and ecosystem services using the SEEA are already part of the monitoring framework, and the Committee has contributed draft methodological notes.

- Moving forward, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be looking at two parallel work programmes—the development of global datasets for the Global Biodiversity Outlook and facilitating the development of national datasets for monitoring.
- To move forward the monitoring framework, the CBD will establish an ad-hoc technical expert group (AHTEG). Nominations are currently being sought; the scientific community, statistical community and Parties will all be involved, though country nominations ultimately come from Parties/CBD focal points.
- UNSD encouraged Bureau members to get in touch with their CBD focal points so that the statistical community can be represented. At the same time, it was acknowledged that getting a nomination for the national statistical office could be difficult for many countries. Nevertheless, the statistical community should be part of the process and identify key members of the AHTEG to be ambassadors of the statistical community.

5. 18TH MEETING OF THE UNCEEA

- Participants agreed that the event should either be in-person or virtual, given the difficulties of running a hybrid meeting for a global audience.
- Regardless of modality, it was suggested that the meeting be held either the week of 5 June or 19 June, as some UNCEEA members may also attend the DGI global workshop from 13-15 June. In addition, the Conference of European Statisticians will take place the last week of June.
- **Action:** UNSD will send out a survey to UNCEEA members to gauge their ability to travel to NY for the meeting and any preference on dates.

6. AOB

- The OECD informed Bureau members that Area C recently organized a workshop on how to proceed with global land cover accounts. The workshop discussed a data collection strategy and proposed questionnaire. The work will continue to progress through the Spring/Summer.
- Statistics Netherlands noted that Area B1 is creating a list of issues for a possible update of the SEEA Central Framework. Most of these issues will be on monetary accounts, presented in Chapter 4, focusing on the alignment with the updated 2008 SNA as well as new demand for information on sustainable finance. Alignment with the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting was also considered an important issue. The possible update of the SEEA Central Framework will be discussed at the next meeting of the UNCEEA in June.