

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

11 January 2021, teleconference

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** Bert Kroese (UNCEEA Chair and Deputy Director General Statistics Netherlands); Amanda Clark (Australian Bureau of Statistics); Jeff Fritzsche, Carolyn Cahill, (Statistics Canada); P. Bhanumati (MOSPI, India); Federico Gonzales, Cesar Cabrera (INEGI); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Rachael Milicich (Statistics New Zealand); Gerhardt Bouwer (Statistics South Africa); Liz McKeown (ONS, UK); Anton Steurer (Eurostat); Jim Tebrake (IMF); Sven Kaumanns (Chair, London Group on Environmental Accounting); Myriam Linster, Peter Van de Ven (OECD); Sofia Ahlroth (World Bank); Alessandra Alfieri, Jessica Ying Chan, Bram Edens, Marko Javorsek (UNSD); Carl Obst (UNSD consultant)
- **Regrets:** FAO

1. TREATMENT OF VALUATION IN THE SEEA EA

- Members discussed a note drafted by the SEEA EA Editor in collaboration with a small group of experts, including the Chair, UNSD and other Bureau members which summarizes the positions on valuation that emerged from the global consultation and proposes a way forward for the SEEA EA with regards to valuation. The note proposes to keep chapters 8-11 on monetary valuation and integrated accounting as part of the standard while at the same time make specific reference to the concerns expressed by some experts.
- Bureau members voiced overall support for the note and the approach proposed. In particular, they noted the importance of valuation for policy and the conceptual soundness of the methodology, which is in line with the SNA.
- Bureau members agreed on the importance of clearly presenting the caveats and warnings on valuation, both in the introduction to the document, including in Chapter 1 and Section D and throughout the valuation chapters. In addition, it was suggested that different views and perspectives on economics and valuation should be acknowledged in the document.
- Bureau members also agreed that text on how the values should be interpreted and how they can be explained by national statistical offices to users should be included in the introduction of Section D. The manual should be clear on what valuation in the SEEA EA can and cannot do.
- It was clarified that there will be no obligation to compile and report the SEEA EA standard; however, if compiled, it should be done so according to the standard.
- In terms of timeline for finishing the manual, UNSD clarified that the note on valuation will be reviewed by the Technical Committee on the SEEA EA at its next meeting on Wednesday 13 January and will be circulated to the UNCEEA by the end of the week. Within the next week, a small group of Bureau members will produce a first draft of the text to be included in Chapter 1 and the introduction of Section D

before Chapter 8. The complete draft document, reflecting the inputs from the global consultation as well as the revised text on valuation, will be circulated to the UNCEEA on 22 January. The final draft will be completed the first week of February to be posted for the UN Statistical Commission.

- Bureau members also discussed the draft research agenda, which accompanies the note on the treatment of valuation.
 - The question of prioritization of topics on the research agenda was brought up. However, it was acknowledged that coming to a detailed prioritization would be difficult, as different countries have different priorities. Thus, the agenda will not be prioritized for the moment.
 - An implementation strategy to be developed for the UN Statistical Commission in 2022 could also address issues in implementation.
- **Action:** Bureau members were requested to send any written comments on the note and accompanying research agenda by Thursday, 14 January 2021.

2. UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION

- UNSD provided some details on how the upcoming UNSC will be run. Since the session will be virtual, there will be much less time for discussion. There will only be three sessions/days of three hours, giving only 20 minutes for each agenda item. There will be discussions amongst countries prior to the meeting, in order to arrive at three to four interventions per agenda item which represent the various views.
- The report will be drafted by Wednesday afternoon of the week, to be discussed and agreed on by Friday.
- It was agreed that the Bureau would schedule a meeting before the manual is posted online in February, in case there are issues with the proposed way forward. If there are no issues, then the meeting will be canceled.