

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

29 January 2024 teleconference

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** André Loranger (Chair), Sonia Raizenne (Statistics Canada); Jonathon Khoo, Jacqui Vitas (Australian Bureau of Statistics); Sven Kaumanns (Federal Statistical Office of Germany and London Group on Environmental Accounting); Sanjay Kumar, Ruchi Mishra (MOSPI India); Mandy Driver (South Africa); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Ian Townsend (UK Office of National Statistics); Arturo de la Fuente (Eurostat); Alessandra Alfieri (IMF); Catherine Van Rompaey (World Bank); Roberto Astolfi, Bram Edens (OECD); Sokol Vako (ESCAP-SIAP); Ilaria di Matteo, Jessica Ying Chan, Marinella Cirillo, Marko Javorsek (UNSD)
- **Regrets:** Kenya National Bureau of Statistics; INEGI Mexico; Statistics New Zealand, Philippine Statistics Authority; FAO

1. INTRODUCTION

- The Chair welcomed Bureau members. He introduced a UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) background document prepared by the UN Network of Economic Statisticians which was recently sent out to UNCEEA for feedback. The paper covers the findings and recommendations of the Network's Beyond GDP sprint of 2023.
- The Chair noted that he has formed a task team with the Secretariat and volunteers from the Bureau to review the UNCEEA's mandate and functioning. The first meeting of the task team will be held on February 8 at 7:00 AM New York time.
- Actions:
 - Bureau members are requested to provide any comments to the Network of Economic Statisticians background paper through this [online form](#) by 1 February 2024.
 - Bureau members who wish to participate in the Task Team on the Committee's mandate and functioning should inform UNSD as soon as possible.

2. TASK TEAM TO DEVELOP A FRAMEWORK FOR MAINTAINING AND UPDATING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS AND MANUALS

- The World Bank updated the Bureau on the Task Team to develop a framework for Maintaining and Updating International Economic and Environmental Accounting Systems and Manuals.
- The purpose of the group is to develop recommendations to better coordinate the development and updating of economic and environmental accounting standards and

manuals. The Task Team plans to develop these recommendations in collaboration with the relevant governance bodies; approval of the recommendations will be sought by each of the relevant governance bodies as well.

- The UNCEEA Chair and Secretary are participating in the Task Team and will update and consult with the Bureau as appropriate. The Task Team recently held their first meeting and will soon finalize their Terms of Reference.

3. UPDATE OF THE SEEA CENTRAL FRAMEWORK

- Overall the Bureau agreed with the list of issues, prioritization document and project management framework, but provided additional input for consideration before the documents are sent to the broader Committee.
- List of issues:
 - It was suggested that additional information could be added to the list of issues that identifies the relevant chapter and paragraph and whether the issue overlaps or relates to specific standards.
 - In addition, a few Bureau members suggested that the SNA issues be moved into the overall group and the group on physical flow and asset accounts be split into two separate groups.
 - Additional topics to consider adding included the update of the Standard International Energy Product Classification (SIEC), the valuation of water and the use of the SEEA for disaster-related information.
- Prioritization: The Bureau agreed with how the SEEA CF TC has prioritized the issues, but suggested to create a category of core issues that need to be tackled during the current update, regardless of effort and policy relevance. This category would include, for example, issues related to alignment with the 2025 SNA.
- Project management framework:
 - The Bureau agreed to the overall timeline, though it was suggested to increase the amount of time for global consultation, as some issues may need iterative global consultations.
 - It was noted that the update will not only require funding, but the time of many experts as well, given that much of the contribution is likely to be in-kind. Thus, there will need to be a tradeoff in terms of the scope of the update and the time of experts in the community. Participants agreed to add some text on governance to the project management document, including which bodies/individuals take a decision on aspects such as the final list of issues to be tackled given the level of resources ultimately made available, as well as the resolution of issue papers.
- The SEEA CF TC Chair clarified the purpose of the global/broad consultation on the list of issues. The purpose is to share the plans for the revision with both the statistical community and other stakeholders to see if they agree with the issues identified or have

new issues to add. It was suggested to include the prioritization of the issues as part of the global/broad consultation.

- Actions:
 - Bureau members to provide any further written comments no later than Friday, 9 February.
 - The SEEA CF TC Chair and Secretariat will revise the list of issues and project management framework based on the Bureau's comments, and then circulate the documents to the broader Committee.

4. UPCOMING UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION

- An in-person meeting of the Bureau will take place on the sidelines of the UNSC on Monday, 26 February 2024, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Bureau members were requested to prepare their delegates for the Bureau discussion.
- Bureau members who will not be attending the UNSC in person will be able to attend as observers virtually.
- The Committee is organizing a [side event](#) on the new challenges for national statistical offices for environment and climate change statistics and the role of the SEEA. The event, co-organized with the Secretariat and IMF, will be held on Tuesday, 27 January during the lunchtime break. The side event will be held back-to-back with the side event of the UNWTO on the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism.
- Actions:
 - The Secretariat will send a meeting invite and agenda for the Bureau meeting.
 - Bureau members are requested RSVP to the Bureau meeting so that the Secretariat will have an idea of the number of attendees.

5. NEXT MEETING OF THE UNCEEA

- It was proposed that the next UNCEEA be held on 25 and 26 June, with possibly an additional day. Bureau members agreed that the meeting should ideally be held in-person, but the Secretariat will need to check on available funding.
- Actions:
 - Bureau members were requested to let the Secretariat know if there are any conflicting events during the week of 24 June as soon as possible.

6. 2023 GLOBAL ASSESSMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL-ECONOMIC ACCOUNTING AND SUPPORTING STATISTICS

- The Secretariat provided the tentative results of the Global Assessment; 89 countries have implemented the SEEA according to the Assessment—the same number of

countries which were implementing the SEEA in 2020. At the same time, the Assessment indicated that many countries which were not implementing the SEEA have plans to do so in the future.

- It was noted that new initiatives such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and Data Gaps Initiative may help increase implementation of the SEEA. At the same time, it was noted that the Committee will need to put a good deal of resources into the update of the SEEA CF which may take away from efforts to increase implementation.

7. TOUR DE TABLE

- The Area A Chair noted that the group is currently planning two webinars on the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting and how it can support biodiversity monitoring and reporting. The webinars will take place in March/April and be followed by webinars on sustainable finance and business accounting.
- The SEEA CF TC plans to participate in the upcoming COFOG and GFS revisions and is coordinating representatives from the SEEA community to participate in these revision processes.
- The SEEA EA TC has convened two task teams to work on the metadata for two headline indicators of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (A2 Extent of natural ecosystems and B1 Services provided by ecosystems). The metadata is nearly finalized for these indicators.
- Members of Area C are making good progress in global data collection for material flow, air emission and physical energy flow accounts and trying to re-start efforts on water and land cover. The Area C Chair noted that implementation of water accounts is rather difficult given data availability and suggested that the Bureau could discuss during their next meeting whether there is room to change the Committee's priority accounts and if indicators should also be included in the work of Area C.
- The Area D co-chair noted that they will soon reach out to additional prospective members to enlarge the group. In addition, the group is working on updating the Terms of Reference for the SEEA Focal Point Network. The group is drafting a short survey for existing Focal Points which will inform the update.

8. AOB

- It was noted that the deadline for proposals for sessions at the World Data Forum is coming soon. Previous World Data Forums have had sessions related to the SEEA. It was suggested that the Committee and London Group propose a session.
 - Action: The Chair of the London Group will draft a session proposal for consideration.

