

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

1 June, 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); Simon Felgendreher (Destatis, Germany and London Group on Environmental Accounting); Rakesh Maurya (MOSPI, India); Christine Magu (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics); Rachael Milicich (Statistics New Zealand); Mandy Driver (SANBI, South Africa); Ian Townsend (United Kingdom Office of National Statistics); Paulo Lourenco Dias Nunes (FAO); Roberto Astolfi, Myriam Linster (OECD); Sokol Vako (ESCAP – SIAP); Alessandra Alfieri, Jessica Ying Chan, Julian Chow, Marko Javorsek (UNSD)
- **Regrets:** INEGI (Mexico), Philippine Statistical Authority, Eurostat, IMF, World Bank

1. UNCEEA MEETING

- The Bureau welcomed the tentative agenda for the upcoming UNCEEA meeting.
- It was agreed that area leads should put forth concrete questions for the Committee in the cover notes for their areas. This would help focus the discussion on clear outcomes and ensure that the meeting achieves its objectives.
- The Bureau agreed that the Committee should further engagement with the global South and non-OECD countries. While the Committee's membership is regionally representative, the importance of active engagement/participation in implementing the SEEA from developing countries was recognized. The Chair and the Secretariat will discuss how to raise the issue of engagement with the global South in the UNCEEA meeting.
- The Area A Chair agreed to invite the chair of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics to the meeting to further collaboration.

2. TOUR DE TABLE

- Area A is drafting an assessment of different groups working on environmental economic accounting and related statistics which will help inform coordination and lessen duplication of effort. Area A members are currently providing input and feedback on the draft, and Bureau members will also be asked to contribute. The assessment will serve as an input into prioritizing systematic engagement with different initiatives.
- Area B1 is actively participating in the activities under the update of the SNA and the updates of international classifications (currently ISIC and CPC, and soon COFOG and SIEC). It was noted that although discussion on a potential revision of the SEEA CF will

not take place until next year's UNCEEA meeting, the SEEA CF TC plans to already start thinking about the issues this year, so as to deliver a concrete proposal for next year's meeting.

- The Bureau welcomed Mandy Driver, South African National Biodiversity Institute, as the new chair of Area B2. The focus of the SEEA EA TC work is now on SEEA EA implementation. The SEEA EA TC now has two subgroups, one on forest and one on ocean, both of which have been meeting regularly. The SEEA EA TC has also participated in meetings on the revision of ISIC and CPC.
- With regards to biodiversity, the technical committee continues to engage with the CBD Secretariat on the monitoring framework for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (currently under development), with an expert group meeting on the monitoring framework and indicators being held by CBD at the end of June. Several members of the UNCEEA have been nominated to participate in the workshop, and accepted nominees should be informed soon.
- Area B2 (in particular the subgroup on forest) is also engaging with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, including its Task Force on Monitoring (chaired by FAO) and Task Force on Finance (chaired by the World Bank).
- The technical committee is also beginning to plan for the Forum of Experts on Ecosystem Accounting (to be held at the beginning of December).
- Area C has recently disseminated pilot air emission account (OECD) and physical energy flow account (UNSD) questionnaires to a small group of countries. Once finalized, these questionnaires will be used for global data collection as well as for the relevant Data Gaps Initiative (DGI) recommendations. OECD and UNSD are currently analyzing the results of the pilot and implementing a common strategy for validation, which ensures that the same approach will be taken across organizations. These efforts at joint validation will also be shared with Eurostat. In addition, Area C has started global data collection for material flow accounts (UNEP). Finally, there has been progress made in developing a collaborative programme on land cover with the engagement of different international agencies, including FAO and UNCCD.
- The Bureau welcomed Christine Magu and Sokol Vako as co-chairs for Area D. Area D plans to meet quarterly from now on, and one of the first activities has been setting up a database that members can update. This database holds information on country compilation (derived from the Global Assessment), planned activities by regional commissions and other international partners and contact information for SEEA focal points. The group also plans to update the SEEA CF implementation guide and provide support for the administration of the 2022 Global Assessment.
- Area E is currently conducting a landscape assessment of business accounting initiatives relevant to the SEEA. The group will use this assessment to determine which initiatives to prioritize. The assessment will be presented during the UNCEEA meeting, and

initiatives such as the Task Force for Nature Related Financial Disclosures will also be presented.

- The London Group on Environmental Accounting has recently completed its call for papers and received 17 abstracts. The meeting is planned for 26 to 29 September in Bonn. The Bureau agreed that the meeting would be a good opportunity to discuss issues such as the revisions of international classifications and SEEA-related issues in the update of the 2008 SNA.

3. ARIES SECTOR HUB

- UNSD introduced the ARIES Sector Hub, which is designed to further the development and use of the ARIES for SEEA through a collaboration between UNSD, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Basque Centre for Climate Change and the Donostia International Physics Centre, in support of the UN Global Platform. The sector hub will be established under the aegis of the UNCEEA and UN Committee on Big Data. It will have a multi-stakeholder advisory committee which will focus on strategic issues.
- The news of the sector hub was welcomed. At the same time, it was noted that both the benefits and disadvantages of using big data and earth observation should be clearly communicated to countries, and that there is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach to ecosystem accounting. It was stressed that the data generated for compiling ecosystem accounts from global data sets should be nationally owned and, where possible, improved with national data.
- It was suggested that the sector hub partners consider inviting representatives from the ecological community to the advisory board, in addition to representatives from the geospatial, statistical and big data communities.
- **Action:** Bureau members are kindly requested to provide any written comments on the ToR by Monday, 13 June. Involvement from Bureau members in the sector hub is also welcome.

4. AOB

- Bureau members congratulated the Chair on his upcoming appointment as Chief Statistician and Data Officer and Director of the Statistics Department of the IMF. The upcoming UNCEEA meeting will be the Chair’s last meeting, and the search is ongoing for a new chair. The Chair and Secretariat are exploring the possibility of having co-chairs—one from a developing country and one from a developed country.
- High-level Political Forum (HLPF): The UNCEEA and the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) plan to organize a joint side event to the HLPF on how natural capital accounting can be used as a transformational tool to address institutional and governmental fragmentation, in support of a green recovery. Pending confirmation, the side event will take place the week of 11 July.

- The OECD updated and consolidated its three Recommendations on environmental information and reporting into a single legal instrument. The new Recommendation is expected to be adopted by the OECD Council at ministerial level on 10 June. It contains a provision requesting countries to implement the SEEA.
- New Zealand shared the link to the report [*Artificial Intelligence of the Environment in Aotearoa New Zealand*](#) and the UK a link to the report [*Habitat extent and condition statistics*](#) which shares the SEEA EA structure.