

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

27 May 2021, teleconference

## Meeting minutes

- **Present:** Bert Kroese (UNCEEA Chair and Deputy Director General Statistics Netherlands); Amanda Clark (Australian Bureau of Statistics); Carolyn Cahill, Greg Peterson (Statistics Canada); P. Bhanumati (MOSPI, India); Raul Figueroa, Graciela Marquez, Jose Eduardo de la Torre (INEGI); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Vivian Ilarina (Philippine Statistics Authority); Gerhardt Bouwer (Statistics South Africa); Anton Steurer (Eurostat); Sven Kaumanns (Chair, London Group on Environmental Accounting); Roberto Astolfi, Myriam Linster (OECD); Catherine Van Rompaey (World Bank); Alessandra Alfieri, Jessica Ying Chan, Bram Edens, Marko Javorsek (UNSD)
- **Regrets:** Statistics New Zealand, United Kingdom, FAO, IMF

## 1. TOUR DE TABLE

- Area leads provided an update with an eye towards the June Committee meeting and the preparation of a programme of work for 2021-25.
- Area A – Coordination and Communication
  - The discussion at the June meeting will focus on mainstreaming the SEEA and bringing more initiatives under the SEEA umbrella. The group is currently trying to map out the communities relevant to the SEEA and UNCEEA. Participants agreed that the Committee is operating in a competitive space full of initiatives and that the group should focus on making sure the Committee and official statistics have a seat at the table and prioritizing areas for coordination.
  - It was suggested that the discussion at the meeting focus on two aspects of mainstreaming the SEEA – strategic positioning and better promoting and disseminating existing materials. In this context it was noted that having global databases and creating one platform for SEEA and other accounts would be useful.
- Area B1 – Technical Committee on the SEEA Central Framework
  - The group will prepare a document on options for an update for the SEEA Central Framework to be presented to the Committee. While updating the SEEA Central Framework will put pressure to advance the research agenda, it will require substantial resources.
  - Issues for the potential update have been identified; the group will need to prioritize the issues to be addressed and possibly proceed in step with the

development of technical notes. It is hoped that this prioritization can help the group make progress on the research agenda.

- Area B2 – Technical Committee on the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting
  - The June meeting will focus on the implementation strategy for the SEEA EA as well as a data interoperability strategy which stems from the development of the ARIES for SEEA Explorer. Participants agreed with the outline of the implementation strategy and noted that sequencing and prioritization could be embedded into the strategy itself.
  - Since the adoption of the SEEA EA, the Technical Committee has been making final revisions to the document as per the request from the Commission. The Bureau agreed with the proposed changes to the SEEA EA as outlined in the background document and agreed to sign off on the final document, which is expected to be completed in July 2021.
  - Bureau members thanked Statistics Canada for providing improved graphics for the manual.
  - Other current activities include the formation of a group on valuation, as requested by the Commission; finalization of biophysical guidelines; and preparations of the next Forum of Experts on SEEA EA, which will take place in the fall.
- Area C – Development of Databases
  - The subgroup has made progress over the past years on SDMX, but overall progress has been slower than expected.
  - Development of global databases remains one of the highest priorities, and the discussion at the UNCEEA should focus on a strategy to advance this area of work, which is primarily linked to the priority of each international agency. For the Committee meeting, the subgroup will present an updated roadmap and timeline which takes into account the tasks of the existing roadmap. The roadmap will also discuss data flows and governance of the priority datasets.
- Area D – Implementation and statistical capacity building
  - For the June meeting, the group will propose administration of a Global Assessment “light” which will allow for data collection for SDG indicator 15.9.1. It was suggested to proceed with a light questionnaire to minimize the response burden on countries.
  - The group will also propose that the area’s work programme be split into two different streams—one focusing on the Global Assessment and the other focusing on capacity building, particularly given the recent adoption of the SEEA EA. The regional commissions would have a large role to play in the capacity building workstream.
- Business accounting

- Based on the workshop held on 20 May, UNSD will draft a way forward for the subgroup and present it to the Committee. There will be two basic workstreams: alignment of standards and communication/dissemination of data. For the latter, it was noted activities could focus on making an accessible “SEEA for businesses” and on ensuring that existing data is made more available and accessible to businesses.
- It was noted that given the number of initiatives and openings in the space, the group should prioritize their activities.

## **2. NEXT STEPS**

- The Bureau agreed that another meeting before the Committee meeting would be useful. This meeting would discuss the overall prioritization of activities taking into account the priorities in each area as suggested by each area lead. This prioritization would help ensure the Committee’s overall work programme makes the best use of limited resources. The proposal would then be brought to the Committee.