

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

17 May 2023 teleconference

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** Gemma Van Halderen (Chair); Jonathon Khoo (Australian Bureau of Statistics); Sylvie Arial, Mariam Iqbal, André Loranger (incoming Chair, Statistics Canada), Sonia Raizenne (Statistics Canada); Simon Felgendreher (Destatis, Germany and London Group on Environmental Accounting); Eduardo de la Torre (INEGI, Mexico); Christine Magu (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Ian Townsend (UK Office of National Statistics); Valentina Ramaschiello (FAO); Jim Tebrake (IMF); Sarah Barahona (OECD); Sokol Vako (ESCAP-SIAP); Catherine Van Rompaey (World Bank); Alessandra Alfieri, Jessica Ying Chan, Marinella Cirillo, Marko Javorsek (UNSD)
- **Regrets:** MOSPI India, Statistics New Zealand, Philippine Statistics Authority, SANBI-South Africa, Eurostat

1. CHAIR OF THE UNCEEA

- Due to resource constraints and personnel changes, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) announced that unfortunately, they are not in a position to continue as the interim chair. The Bureau thanked Gemma Van Halderen for her leadership over these past few months and wished her well in her future endeavors.
- Statistics Canada volunteered to take up the role of the interim chair, and André Loranger will lead the Committee meeting in June. The Bureau warmly welcomed André as interim chair. The formal election of the Chair will take place during the UNCEEA meeting in June 2023.
- The ABS remains actively involved in the UNCEEA working groups, and it was suggested that ABS could take over Area A from Statistics Canada depending on domestic priorities and available resources. The ABS and Statistics Canada will meet soon to discuss. .

2. AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF THE 18TH MEETING OF THE UNCEEA

- Based on the results of the survey that UNSD sent on the modality and timing of the meeting, it was decided that the meeting would be held virtually on 20-21 June 2023.
- The Chair introduced the tentative agenda for the 18th Meeting of the UNCEEA, which the Bureau endorsed.
- While a virtual meeting enables broad participation, it also tends to result in less inclusive discussions. Thus, the Secretariat encouraged Bureau members to take the lead in starting/energizing the discussion during the meeting.

- Bureau members agreed that the cover notes should be clear on the questions being posed to the Committee and the decisions/actions that need to be made during the meeting. It was emphasized that the cover notes should be made available two weeks before the meeting. This will give committee members sufficient time to read the documents and consult with stakeholders as necessary.
- It was suggested that a portion of the agenda be dedicated to reviewing the overall workplan of the UNCEEA. The Secretariat will prepare a background document with an overall workplan to facilitate this discussion. This synthesis document will be based on work plans and content in each of the cover notes.
- It was also noted that ideally, the workplan, especially with regard to the update of the SEEA Central Framework, would take into consideration the updates to other statistical standards and classifications. It also noted that an analysis of updating standards is ongoing as part of the update of the SNA. While the SEEA does not necessarily need to be updated completely in sync with other standards and classifications, the Committee should be made aware of relevant updates and synchronize its activities as relevant.

3. TOUR DE TABLE OF AREA LEADS

- Area A is currently examining its workplan for the next year. The workplan has two main components: 1) a landscape assessment of the groups and initiatives related to environmental accounting; and 2) a webinar series on the applications of the SEEA that will engage stakeholder groups.
- Area B1 is refining the issue list for a possible update of the SEEA Central Framework, which will be the main topic of discussion under this area during the UNCEEA meeting. Next steps include a prioritization for issue list and possibly a project management plan, depending on whether/when an update will take place. Area B1 is also engaged with the update of the SNA as well as the CEF, SIEC and COFOG updates.
- Area B2 has continued to tackle substantive topics on the research agenda during its bimonthly meetings. The group recently had a discussion on carbon accounting in view of its possible inclusion in the World Bank Change in Wealth of Nations. The next meeting will focus on the different mapping initiatives and products for global ecosystem extent. The working group on forest is also advancing its research agenda, while the group on ocean is stalled due to lack of resources.
- Area C has begun data collection, with UNSD receiving responses to the physical energy flow and air emission accounts questionnaires. OECD will begin data collection for the same accounts in June. Data collection for material flow accounts is ongoing, with UNEP taking the lead. Finally, a technical workshop to make progress on data collection for land is planned for September.
- Area D has focused its efforts on updating a document supporting countries to start the implementation of the SEEA, which will be presented to the Committee in June. Design

and administration of the 2023 Global Assessment, which is a benchmark assessment, will be the focus for the group moving forward.

- Area E has continued to engage with business initiatives and organizations with a view towards harmonization between private sector standards and the SEEA. UNSD has continued to play a role as a knowledge partner of the Task Force for Nature Related Financial Disclosures. In addition, the working group provided collective comments (along with Area B2) on the Global Reporting Initiative's draft biodiversity disclosures, which underwent global consultation in March.