

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

20 November 2023 teleconference

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** André Loranger (Chair), Augustine Akuoko-Asibey, Sylvie Arial, 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); Sundeepa Ghosh (MOSPI India); Christine Magu (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Vivian Ilarina (Philippine Statistics Authority); Ian Townsend (UK Office of National Statistics); Arturo de la Fuente (Eurostat); Alessandra Alfieri, Jim Tebrake (IMF); Roberto Astolfi, Bram Edens (OECD); Ilaria di Matteo, Jessica Ying Chan, Marko Javorsek (UNSD)
- **Regrets:** INEGI Mexico; Statistics New Zealand, South Africa, World Bank, ESCAP-SIAP; FAO

1. INTRODUCTION

- The Chair welcomed Bureau members. He indicated that with the new change in leadership, it would be a good opportunity to have a close review of the overall mandate, structure, membership and working methods of the Committee in order to see if improvements/adjustments could be made in order to reflect current and new priorities. It was noted that the Committee has been operating under the same structure and mandate for roughly the past seven years, and this was a good time to re-evaluate it. It was proposed that a small group of interested members of the Bureau could work together with the Chair in order to conduct this review with the aim to present it at the next UNCEEA meeting in June 2024.
- Actions: Bureau members interested in this exercise are kindly requested to inform the Chair and Secretariat.

2. COMMITTEE'S REPORT TO THE UNSC

- Overall the Bureau supported the draft report circulated prior to the meeting. Based on the discussion, it was agreed that it was premature to circulate the list of prioritized issues to the UNSC since a full discussion with the Bureau and with the broader Committee has not yet taken place. It was agreed to focus the section on Area B1 on the drivers for the update rather than on the prioritization exercise. It was also agreed to include in the report the current timeline (as discussed at the UNCEEA meeting) with the caveats that it may be adjusted in order to align with the revision processes of related standards, such as COFOG and GFS.

- Action: The Secretariat will circulate the revised report to the Committee for their comments. Given that the deadline for the report is a week away, the Secretariat will request the Committee to provide feedback on major issues only.

3. UPDATE OF THE SEEA CENTRAL FRAMEWORK

- The Area B1 chair shared the work the SEEA CF TC has been undertaking for the update of the SEEA CF. The SEEA CF TC has arrived at a first version of a list of priority issues. It was agreed that the list of priority issues should be reviewed by the Bureau and then the Committee. The Committee should then undertake a global consultation for the list of issues in 2024, with the aim to present the list of issues at the 2024 UNCEEA meeting, and then at the 2025 UNSC.
- It was noted that further work needed to be done to secure resources (both financial and in-kind) and come to an understanding of a realistic timeline and scope. It was also suggested that the Committee should harness, to the extent possible, existing efforts of other groups to make the best use of limited resources.
- It was suggested that the Committee be able to articulate the scope of the update clearly and realistically, taking into consideration resources, by the next UNCEEA meeting in June.
- While a list of issues will not be presented until the 2025 UNSC, it was agreed that work can already begin in 2024, especially on long-standing and critical priority issues. In particular, the London Group will soon issue a call for papers for their 2024 meeting, which will request papers on some of the priority issues.

4. ENDORSEMENT OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PURPOSES AND SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURISM

- The Area B1 Chair and Eurostat informed the Bureau of the latest developments of the Classification of Environmental Purposes (CEP). Over the past year, Eurostat has worked closely with the UN Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications (UNCEISC) to ensure that the CEP can function as an international statistical classification. Following a global consultation in late 2022, the UNCEISC set up a working group on the CEP to review the outcome of the global consultation and address outstanding issues. The working group brought together experts from environmental account and classifications. The version of CEP submitted to the Bureau was the outcome of the discussions of the working group. The SEEA CF TC reviewed and endorsed the classification. In addition, the UNCEISC also reviewed it against the criteria for international statistical classifications and endorsed the CEP last month, noting the importance of continuous update of this classification especially with regards to the upcoming revision of COFOG and the SEEA CF in order to ensure alignment and

consistency. The UNCEEA Bureau agreed with this assessment, which will be reflected in the UNSC report.

- The Area B1 Chair also informed the Bureau of the SEEA CF TC's endorsement of the environment chapter of the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST). The Committee has participated closely in the development of the environment section of the SF-MST over its development over the past years. The Bureau agreed to reflect the support of the Committee for the chapter of the SF-MST that deals with the environmental sustainability of tourism in the UNSC report. UNWTO will submit the SF-MST to the UNSC for adoption this year in a special agenda item on tourism statistics.

5. COORDINATION FOR MAINTAINING AND UPDATING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS AND MANUALS

- IMF introduced the proposal to create a task team to develop recommendations for coordinated mechanisms for maintaining and updating international economic and environmental accounting systems and manuals. This will include recommendations for revision processes and their coordination, as well the development of a common terminology related to revision processes. The task team will bring together an expert from each of the governing committees (i.e. ISWGNA, BOPCOM, GFSAC, UNCEEA, ISWGPS). The oversight for this process will be the various governing bodies of each of the international economic and environmental accounting frameworks.
- The task team will draw upon the recent experience from the coordinated update of the BPM and SNA. The task team will try to codify these existing structures and processes to recommend a way forward for the updates/processes of other macroeconomic and environmental standards.
- In general, members of the Bureau agreed that coordination of the revision processes of these manuals would be beneficial. At the same time, it was noted that the users of these different standards are not all the same and that there needs to be some flexibility built into the system. Also, as this is a cross-cutting task team, it was noted that obtaining buy-in amongst all relevant groups is necessary.
- IMF clarified that the task team is not intended to be a permanent group and is expected to conclude once the recommendations are developed and finalized.
- IMF will send an invitation letter for the task team to the Chair of the UNCEEA to seek nominations to the task team.

6. IMPROVING INFORMATION FLOWS ACROSS THE COMMITTEE

- The Area A Chair introduced an area of discussion which arose during the last Area A meeting: the need for improving information flows across the Committee. In particular, an Area A member noted room for improvement in the information flows between

various UNCEEA working groups (i.e., Areas A, B1, B2, C and D), the Bureau and Committee members.

- The Area A Chair noted three possibilities to help address this issue. In particular Area A could: 1) Encourage area leads to include updates of other UNCEEA working groups in their own meetings; 2) provide a quarterly email update to UNCEEA members that includes quick highlights/updates from working groups; 3) make an effort to have existing events (e.g. UNECE/OECD SEEA seminar) touch upon cross cutting issues.
- The Chair shared the example of how the Network of Economic Statisticians approaches communications. In particular, the Bureau of the Network of Economic Statisticians meets every other week. The full Network has quarterly meetings, with keynote speakers and takes on a number of sprints as well.
- It was suggested that this issue be resolved in the context of the broader discussion of the functioning of the Committee, as individual decisions on issues such as meeting frequency/modality would have several implications. At the same time, it was noted that providing a quarterly email update to UNCEEA members could be a relatively low hanging fruit which could provide at least a short-term resolution to the issue.
- It was further noted that addressing the issue of better communication could also be an opportunity to re-evaluate the Committee's overall communications strategy.

7. PROGRESS UPDATE ON DGI3

- IMF provided an update on the DGI3. A few weeks ago, IMF submitted the first DGI3 progress report to the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in October, which acknowledged the report.
- The DGI3 will use the aligned Eurostat and joint UNSD-OECD air emission account and physical energy flow account reporting templates for recommendations 1 (greenhouse gas accounts and national carbon footprint) and 2 (energy accounts).
- Other recommendations which are relevant to the SEEA are those on climate-impacting government subsidies (recommendation 6) and climate change mitigation and adaptation expenditures (recommendation 7). It was noted that there is room to engage the UNCEEA in these recommendations, particularly in the context of update of the SEEA CF and the CEP.

8. AOB

- The Bureau briefly discussed the possibility of organizing a side event during the UNSC to discuss/present future work on environmental economic accounting. There was a general support of the Bureau to organize such event. It was agreed that a proposal be prepared and circulated to the Bureau in order to secure a spot at the UNSC. UNSD will coordinate with the Chair to prepare a draft for review by the Bureau. A meeting of the Bureau will also be organized during the UNSC.