

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

18 September 2023 teleconference

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** André Loranger (Chair), Augustine Akuoko-Asibey, Sylvie Arial, Sonia Raizenne (Statistics Canada); Peter Meadows (Australian Bureau of Statistics); Simon Schürz (Federal Statistical Office of Germany and London Group on Environmental Accounting); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Kirsten Newton (UK Office of National Statistics); Arturo de la Fuente (Eurostat); Alessandra Alfieri (IMF); Roberto Astolfi, Bram Edens (OECD); Catherine Van Rompaey (World Bank); Sokol Vako (ESCAP-SIAP); Ilaria di Matteo, Jessica Ying Chan, Julian Chow, Marko Javorsek (UNSD)
- **Regrets:** INEGI Mexico; MOSPI India; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics; Statistics New Zealand, Philippine Statistics Authority, South Africa, FAO

1. CHANGES AT UNSD

- The Bureau welcomed Ilaria Di Matteo as the new Chief of the Environmental-Economic Accounts Section of UNSD. She replaces Alessandra Alfieri, who remains a member of the UNCEEA, now representing the IMF.

2. RECAP OF THE UNCEEA MEETING AND MOVING FORWARD TOWARDS THE UNSC

- The Chair provided a quick recap of the highlights of the 18th Meeting of the UNCEEA, which focused on the update of the SEEA CF, moving forward with the SEEA-based indicators of the monitoring framework of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and new global data collection efforts.
- In preparation for the next UN Statistical Commission (27 February – 1 March 2024), the Area Leads will draft a report to be discussed by the Bureau during its November meeting, circulated to the UNCEEA in mid-November and submitted by the Secretariat in late November.

3. UPDATE OF THE SEEA CF

- UNSD made a presentation on an initial project management framework and funding strategy for the SEEA CF update. It was agreed that ultimately, the details of the project management framework and level of funding will depend on the overall scope of issues to be prioritized, available resources and considerations regarding the revisions of related standards such as GFS, COFOG, etc. The details around the update will be firmed up as Area B1 progresses on prioritizing the update issues and narrowing the scope of the revision.

- It was noted that a update of the Government Finance Statistics Manual (GFS) and Monetary Finance Statistics Manual (MFSM) will be coming soon (with the timeline being made clearer in a month's time), and that there would be synergies in the research agenda and therefore the need to coordinate the processes. The importance of coordinating the update of the SEEA CF with the revision of the SNA asset classification was also noted.
- The Area B1 Chair shared the plans of the SEEA CF TC for the next few months. The Technical Committee will meet next week to further elaborate upon an initial list of proposed topics, expanding on the costs and benefits/impacts of each issue and prioritizing them. This document will be shared with the Bureau and UNCEEA, and feed into the Committee's report to the UN Statistical Commission.
- The Area B1 Chair also noted the plan to work with the London Group on tackling these issues, as there is overlap with some of the issues which were discussed at last week's London Group meeting.
- It was also noted that the update of the SEEA CF could potentially include a review of the Applications and Extensions document and updating some of its content to be included in an annex of the revised CF. However, this would take additional effort/resources.

4. TOUR DE TABLE OF AREA LEADS

- Area A met earlier this year to discuss moving forward with its new workplan, which 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. The group also agreed that it should maintain the links to the business accounting community that Area E fostered through its work. UNSD will serve as the primary liaison between Area A and the private sector and will also solicit updates/news from private sector representatives of the former Area E. In addition, IMF will represent the UNCEEA in the Sustainability Reference Group of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board as it moves forward with developing sustainability reporting standards for the public sector.
- Area B1 is refining the issue list for the update of the SEEA Central Framework, which it will discuss at its meeting next week.
- Area B2 has met recently to agree upon a two-year work programme with six main areas: 1) development of practical guidance notes; 2) GBF headline indicators based on SEEA EA; 3) the working groups on forest ecosystems and ocean accounting; 4) contribution to the broader SEEA and SNA processes; 5) engagement with related initiatives; and 6) communities of practice (e.g. Forum of Experts on Ecosystem Accounting). On the development of practical guidance, it was noted that alignment between groups working on regional vs global levels would be beneficial.

- Area C has focused its work on the priority accounts. OECD and UNSD have joined Eurostat to collect air emission and physical energy flow accounts. The international organizations will try to disseminate the accounts received at the end of the year or early next. Area C is also working to bring together stakeholders to resume the technical workshops on land cover accounts. For water, there are efforts to try to use existing questionnaires to compile accounts.
- Area D met earlier last month and is currently focusing on the Global Assessment, which was sent to Member States earlier this month. It is coordinating with the UN regional commissions to increase the response rate. During its meeting, Area D also agreed to expand its membership to partner agencies which are working on ecosystem accounting and to revitalize the network of SEEA focal points.
- The London Group Chair shared a recap of the 29th Meeting of the London Group. The London Group thanked Statistics South Africa for hosting the successful four-day event which included roughly 50 participants from around the world. One of the main focuses of this year's meeting was the update of the SEEA Central Framework, and it was noted that progressing these issues at the London Group will be done in close cooperation with the SEEA CF TC. In addition to various specific topics discussed, some overarching issues were identified which might need close attention in the future, including defining baselines, setting system boundaries, and ensuring clarity and coherence when communicating the accounts. Next year's London Group will take place in Washington, D.C. at the Bureau of Economic Analysis. A call for papers that outlines the specific topics of interest will be provided by the end of this year to give people more time to prepare their papers.

5. AOB

- IMF informed the Bureau that the proposal for the TOR of a small group including representatives of the different statistical committees will be shared with the Bureau of the UNCEEA as well as other groups. The objective of the small group is to develop a framework for maintaining and updating macro standards ensuring coordination of the various processes including their scheduling. It was noted the UN Network of Economic Statisticians will be conducting a series of sprints on classification and that this could be an interesting topic of discussion at one of the upcoming sprints.
- OECD informed participants on the creation of an informal OECD expert group on natural capital. This group was formed based on an ISWGNA request to form a group on practical implementation challenges related to natural capital. The group has established a ToR and invited participants. The first meeting will take place in October; the Chair of Area B1 will be the UNCEEA representative to this group and the UNSD SEEA team will also participate.

- The World Bank provided an update on the 2025 SNA update. The guidance notes have been finalized, and draft chapters are currently undergoing consultation. Chapter 2 on Wellbeing and Sustainability has been circulated for consultation, including with UNCEEA members (ending 9 October). UNSD will continue to circulate notices of global consultation for SEEA-related draft chapters to the broader UNCEEA, and Bureau/UNCEEA members are encouraged to comment.
- UK ONS informed participants of their upcoming series of events with the Royal Statistical Society on beyond GDP metrics; all of the events will feature elements of the environment dimension. More information and registration can be found [here](#).
- IMF noted that there is a BIOFIN-related meeting taking place in London in October. IMF will liaise with UK ONS to see if they might represent the UNCEEA in this event.
- Eurostat informed the Bureau on the development of guidance notes on ecosystem accounts. The Bureau encouraged coordination with the SEEA EA TC to ensure a consistent set of guidelines. It was suggested that a coordination mechanism for the preparation of guidelines and guidance notes on different parts of the SEEA should be discussed by the Bureau at future meetings.