

UNCEEA WORKING GROUP ON CAPACITY BUILDING (AREA D)

Please note that the Secretariat kindly requests Committee members to submit written responses to select questions to the Committee at the end of the document, in advance of the meeting. This is because there will be limited time for discussion during the meeting itself. Please send your responses to these questions to seea@un.org no later than Wednesday, 1st July.

Background papers and resources

- [2020 Global Assessment of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics](#)
- [Draft ToR of SEEA Focal Points](#)

Current Implementation of the SEEA

According to information gathered from the 2017 Global Assessment of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics, supplemented with more up-to-date information from countries, UN Regional Commissions and other international organizations, it is currently estimated (as of June 2020) that 92 countries have compiled SEEA accounts (either SEEA CF and/or SEEA EEA). Amongst these 92 countries that have compiled accounts:

- All have compiled SEEA CF accounts and 41 have also compiled SEEA EEA accounts
- 62 countries have published accounts
- 48 countries have regular funding

In addition, 27 countries are planning to compile accounts.

This estimate indicates the Committee's progress in reaching the 2020 implementation targets¹, and the 2020 Global Assessment will provide the final figures.

2020 Global Assessment

Over the past year, one area of focus of the working group has been updating the 2020 Global Assessment. The Assessment is a critical data source for understanding countries' capacity building plans and needs, and will be used by the Committee to understand how to better support SEEA implementation. In addition, a critical data source for two Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators focusing on the SEEA (12.b.1 and [15.9.1](#), and for a

¹ At least 100 countries with ongoing, well-resourced programmes on the SEEA Central Framework and 50 countries with ongoing, well-resourced programmes on the SEEA-EEA by 2020. SDG indicator 14.2.1 measures the use of ecosystem based approaches for managing oceans.

supplementary indicator of 14.2.1)² and for monitoring Aichi Target 2 of the Convention of Biological Diversity (which has a direct link with SDG indicator 15.9.1)³. As the Convention on Biological Diversity targets are expiring, the survey is also instrumental in informing the development of the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. In addition, the Assessment will help the UNCEEA understand countries' priorities and needs for technical assistance and will provide an input into the development of supporting materials. This is relevant for many of the SDG indicators related to water, land, oceans, energy, climate change, sustainable consumption and production and other areas. It is also relevant for the Global Biodiversity Framework. The results of the Assessment will be presented to the Commission in 2021.

The questionnaire is expected to be sent out during early fall 2020, after review by the Committee and with the active support and engagement of the UN Regional Commissions and other regional and sub-regional organizations. The data will then be analysed and a report on the Assessment results will be made available to the UNCEEA, and then the Commission, in 2021.

It will be important to obtain information for SDG indicators 12.b.1 and 15.9.1 on an annual basis. While it is possible that the entire Assessment is administered every year, it is suggested to administer the full questionnaire every three years and administer a shorter questionnaire in the intermediate years. This would reduce the burden placed on NSOs while still obtaining annual updates for the SDGs.

SEEA focal points

At the last UNCEEA meeting, the Committee agreed to the establishment of SEEA focal points in each country, to streamline communication and collaboration between the Committee, international organizations and countries, and to support data collection efforts. The list of focal points will need to be maintained over time on a continuous basis, with UNSD maintaining the database, and with members of Area D and the UNCEEA providing updates on changes to focal points. As presented in the focal points concept note,⁴ there are two potential mechanisms for establishing the focal points:

- 1) UNSD sends a letter to the heads of NSOs on behalf of the UNCEEA, asking them to identify a SEEA focal point within their organization.

² SDG indicators 12.b.1 and 15.9.1 measure the implementation of tools to monitor sustainable tourism and the mainstreaming of biodiversity values into policy and accounts, respectively. SDG indicator 14.2.1 measures the use of ecosystem based approaches for managing oceans.

³ This target captures if biodiversity values have been integrated into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies.

⁴ https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/focal_points_concept_note.pdf

- 2) As part of the 2020 Global Assessment, a question is added on identifying a SEEA focal point.

Given that the respondents of the Global Assessment may not be the persons best placed to determine the SEEA focal point, it is proposed that UNSD send a letter to the heads of NSOs, in cooperation with the UN Regional Commissions. As presented in the draft Terms of Reference, it is suggested that the focal points be those person(s) responsible for overall, high-level management of SEEA implementation at a national level as well as responsible for designing and driving forward the strategy for SEEA implementation and use at a high-level and interacting with stakeholders.

New Regional Community of Practice for Natural Capital Accounting

At the first [Africa Forum on Natural Capital Accounting](#) in Kampala in November 2019, 18 African countries committed to create a new Community of Practice for Natural Capital Accounting. A programme of work for the Community of Practice has been developed by the Statistics Division, World Bank, Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa and United Nations Environment Programme all of whom committed to provide technical support and mobilize additional resources needed to increase SEEA implementation in Africa in the coming years. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) offered to host the platform for the Community of Practice as an initial step.

Since the launch in May 2020, which was followed by a formal launch on July 1st 2020, 350 people from 40 African countries have signed up in their individual capacities to join the African NCA-CoP. A WhatsApp group named “Africa SEEA/NCA” has been created and consists of 250 participants from the African countries and organizations, which is used to facilitate sharing of information regarding NCA and SEEA. This will be complemented by the website developed by UNECA. The NCA-CoP will support trainings and knowledge exchanges, as well as working groups on specific topics. The World Bank is funding a Coordinator to the NCA-CoP to facilitate the activities.

Regarding E-learning, there have been two African COP webinars on the following topics:

- African NCA COP webinar: [“Linking natural capital accounts to policy in Africa”](#); and
- African NCA COP webinar: [“Revision of the SEEA EEA statistical standards.”](#)

The webinar for “Linking natural capital accounting to policy in Africa” was successful with 226 delegates participating on the webinar. Similarly, well over 100 delegates participated in the webinar “Revision of the SEEA EEA statistical standards.”

The African Community of Practice joins the ECLAC Community of Practice for the SEEA, which consists of a very active WhatsApp group named “Red Carioca Est. Amb. AmL”, with over 200 participants from ECLAC countries and organisations.

Questions for the Committee

The UNCEEA is asked to consider the below questions. Please note that written responses are requested for questions 1b, 3 and 4. **Please send your responses to seea@un.org no later than Wednesday, 1st July 2020.**

- 1) Global Assessment
 - a. What are the Committee’s views on the [updated 2020 Global Assessment](#)?
 - i. In particular, in the past, the Global Assessment has been sent solely to NSOs. This likely results in undercounting SEEA implementation, particularly for the SEEA-EEA, as it is often implemented by other ministries. The current draft of the 2020 Global Assessment encourages NSOs to play a coordinating role in sending the survey to other institutions also compiling the SEEA. What are the Committee’s views on this?
 - b. **Written response requested:** Does the Committee agree with the proposed frequency and scope of administration of the Global Assessment?
- 2) Implementation
 - a. The current definition of SEEA implementation – which is also relevant in the context of [SDG indicator 15.9.1](#) – is relatively strict.⁵ As a result, it downplays the progress made in the uptake of the SEEA. An alternative approach to implementation would be to take a tiered approach – in which compilation would be considered “implementation”, while regular compilation and publication would be considered “full implementation”. While structural or “regular budget” funds are an important aspect, funding is often complex and the availability of structural funds may mean different things at different institutions. In addition, it is possible that funding comes from different sources and may not be regular, but over a long period of time, with the compilation eventually absorbed into the regular work programme. What are the Committee’s views on this tiered approach to measuring implementation?
- 3) **Written response requested:** Focal points
 - a. Does the UNCEEA agree with the plan to send the heads of NSOs a letter to establish SEEA focal points, with the activities, responsibilities and description of the focal points as described in the [draft ToR](#)?

⁵ [As recommended during the 11th Meeting of the Committee](#): SEEA implementation indicates that one or more SEEA accounts have been compiled and published at least once, and structural (i.e. regular budget) funds must have been allocated for repeat compilation and publication.

- b. Should the list of focal points comprise solely NSOs, or should they also include relevant line ministries and/or other organisations?
- 4) *Written response requested:* Community of Practice
- a. What are the UNCEEA's views on the COPs and how can the Committee better support these efforts?