

CONCEPT NOTE FOR SEEA FOCAL POINTS

UNCEEA WORKING GROUP ON CAPACITY BUILDING (AREA D)

Introduction

At the 47th session of the UN Statistical Commission, the UNCEEA recommended the SEEA implementation targets of at least 100 countries with ongoing, well-resourced programmes in the SEEA Central Framework by 2020 and at least 50 countries with ongoing, well-resourced programmes in the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting by 2020. While good progress has been made, increased efforts will be needed to reach these targets by 2020. These efforts will rely on enhanced coordination among the various international, regional and national stakeholders; the ability to effectively monitor progress; and the ability to regularly report progress and operational issues to interested stakeholders. All of these aspects are contingent on efficient and effective communication. It is in this context that the current document proposes the establishment of country-level SEEA focal points, under the UNCEEA Working Group on Capacity Building (Area D).

Role of country focal points

Communication with countries is currently ad-hoc and fragmented, with no consistent country focal point identified among the international, regional organizations and other stakeholders. Considering the current work programme of the SEEA, which focuses on increased coordination at the country level, the development of national databases, communication of the use of the SEEA for the development of indicators including SDG indicators and development and revision of methodologies, it is important that a single focal point in countries is identified. Thus, it is proposed that members of the UNCEEA work to identify one or more persons within the country as a SEEA focal point. Ideally, this person should be responsible for overall management of SEEA implementation.

As focal point, this person will serve as the first point of contact for the UNCEEA to follow up on matters including (but not limited to):

- Country updates on compilation and programme implementation
- Responses to the Global Assessment
- Validation of SDG indicator 15.9.1
- Data validation of country estimates for global databases
- Transmission of national datasets for global databases
- Communication of the relevance of the SEEA for monitoring and evaluation of existing processes (e.g. CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC)

- Dissemination and gathering of country views on new manuals and standards including the revision of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting

Likewise, the UNCEEA should regularly update the focal point on relevant issues as necessary.

Establishing and maintaining the database

There are two potential mechanisms for establishing the database:

- 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. In some cases, the NSO-identified focal point may not always be appropriate. For example, this may be the case if SEEA-EEA implementation is under the Ministry of Environment, as opposed to the NSO. In these cases, UNSD will work with the NSO focal point to identify any other relevant focal points.
- 2) As part of the 2020 Global Assessment, a question is added on identifying a SEEA focal point. While this will have a lower administrative burden than option 1), identifying a SEEA focal point in advance of the 2020 Global Assessment could help improve the response rate for the assessment.

The database of focal points will need to be maintained over time. It is suggested that UNSD maintain the database, with members of Area D and the UNCEEA providing updates on changes to focal persons as they arise. In particular, UN regional commissions will play a key role in providing updates, given their close contact with countries. In addition, it is proposed to make this database public, via the SEEA website, to maintain transparency and encourage communication between relevant stakeholders.

Questions for the Committee:

The UNCEEA is asked to consider:

- 1) The need to establish SEEA focal points and their role
- 2) The preferred mechanism for establishing the database of focal points
- 3) The preferred mechanism for maintaining the database of focal points