

Side event of the 43rd Session of the UNSC

Implementation of the SEEA

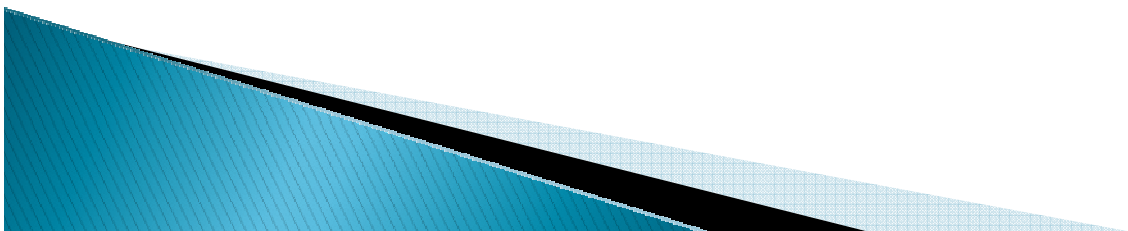
The measurement framework for the
environment and interactions with the economy

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UN Committee of Experts on Environmental Economic Accounting

Purpose

- ▶ Discuss strategies to implement SEEA; learn what has worked well, and what hasn't
- ▶ Will inform UNCEEA in its development of an implementation strategy for SEEA
 - Will be brought back to 44th Statistical Commission meeting in 2013
- ▶ Several esteemed panellists to give us their views
- ▶ Will also provide the opportunity for discussion



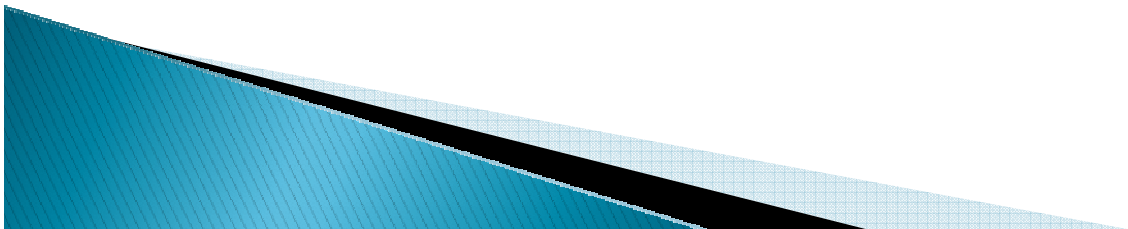
Why environmental–economic accounting is important

‘A country could exhaust its mineral resources, cut down its forests, erode its soil, pollute its aquifers, and hunt its wildlife to extinction, but measured income would not be affected as these assets disappeared.’

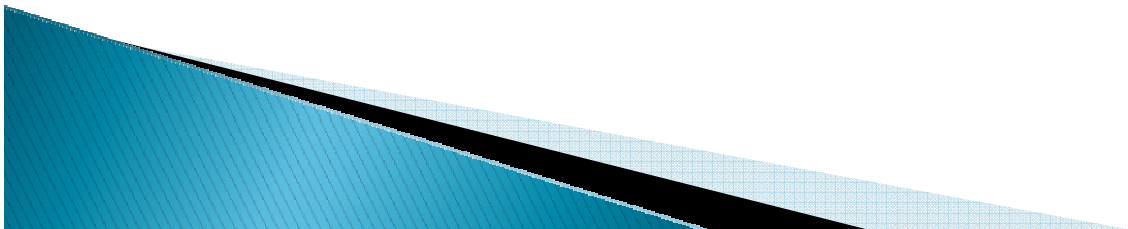
Repetto et al

‘What we measure affects what we do; and if our measurements are flawed, decisions may be distorted. Choices between promoting GDP and protecting the environment may be false choices once environmental degradation is appropriately included in our measurement of economic performance. So too, we often draw inferences about what are good policies by looking at what policies have promoted economic growth; but if our metrics of performance are flawed, so too may be the inferences that we draw.’

Stiglitz et al

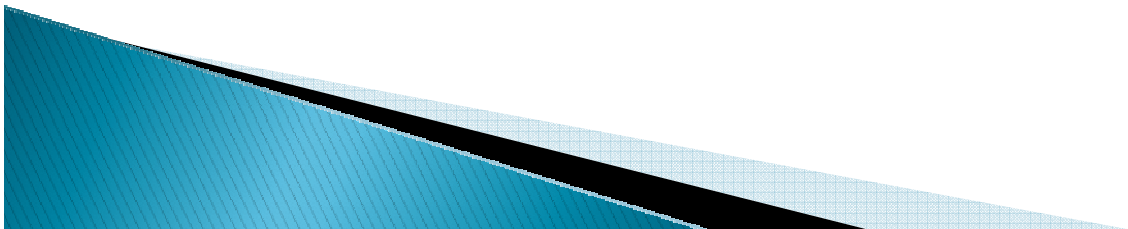


- ▶ Understanding the linkages between the environment and the economy, and the broader society, is critical for effective environmental (and economic) policy making
- ▶ Information is vital, and it needs to be integrated
- ▶ Environmental–economic accounts provides consistency of concepts, definitions and classifications within a systematic organising framework to ensure coherency, comprehensiveness and accuracy of the statistics produced
- ▶ Environmental–economic accounting can assist in improving basic environmental (and economic) statistics and allow for the derivation of indicators that are precisely defined, consistent and interlinked

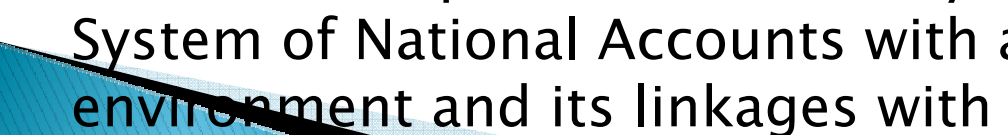


Why statistical offices?

- ▶ We bring a professionalism and a discipline, particularly through our adherence to the fundamental principles of official statistics
- ▶ We have much of the source data required for environmental–economic accounts, and we know how to use these data appropriately
- ▶ We have extensive experience in the compilation of account–type statistics, including importantly the national accounts
- ▶ If we don't produce environmental–economic accounts, then others will do so, and they will probably do it poorly



But there are challenges

- ▶ Environmental–economic accounting is a relatively new field of statistics
 - SEEA first developed in 1993, updated in 2003
 - Aiming for revised SEEA Central Framework to be adopted as a standard at upcoming UNSC meeting
 - This fulfils a mandate given to the UNCEEA by the UNSC in 2007
 - ▶ Some aspects of environmental–economic accounting are problematic
 - Valuation of non–monetary stocks and flows
 - ▶ Some aspects of environmental–economic accounting have only recently emerged
 - Ecosystem accounting
 - ▶ It is for these reasons that the SEEA Central Framework is limited in scope – it is essentially an extension of the System of National Accounts with a specific focus on the environment and its linkages with the economy
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- ▶ There are challenges around data availability and statistical office capabilities to produce environmental–economic accounts
 - But there are choices in how SEEA can be implemented; while the over–arching framework is comprehensive individual components can be implemented progressively depending on circumstances
- ▶ There are also challenges around engaging with policy makers (and funders of NSOs) on the importance of environmental–economic accounting as a core part of a statistical program
- ▶ UNCEEA will seek to provide guidance to the international statistical community on how these challenges can be overcome
 - Today’s side–event will be very helpful to the work of the Committee

