



# System of Environmental Economic Accounting



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Environmental  
Economic  
Accounting

# **MINUTES OF THE 11<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMIC ACCOUNTING (UNCEEA)**

**Version:**  
Final

## SESSION 1: OPENING AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

1. The chair welcomed the committee, noting that the Statistical Commission had provided the UNCEEA with an ambitious mandate to scale up implementation of the SEEA, and drive the advancement of the Experimental Ecosystem Accounts. The chair noted that this will require considerable commitment, and strong coordination within the Committee.

# Seminar

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## SESSION 2: GLOBAL DATABASES

### Summary of Discussion

#### Land Cover and Biodiversity

2. Mr. Sasha Alexander from UNCCD presented the work by UNCCD in consultation with the Inter Agency Advisory Group on developing methodology and data options for the compilation of the three sub-indicators on land cover, land productivity and carbon indicators for the SDG indicator 15.3.1 on land degradation. It was reported that there are ongoing efforts to advance the development of a common reference classification of land cover, taking into account concepts and definitions of the IPCC land use categories, the SEEA and the FAO Global Land Cover Network. As part of the work, a Good Practice Guidance on Land Cover will be developed to look at the importance of national inventories, to assess land cover concepts and their consistency with the development of other sub-indicator on land degradation, and to provide guidance on evaluating changes in land cover.

3. *The Committee stressed the issue of reconciling the sub-indicators to the international standards (IPCC, SEEA) and the international recommended land cover classification. It was pointed out that land cover and land use will be a fundamental requirement for the SDGs, and the need for harmonization of methodology, data sources and the strategic direction was stressed. It was also recognized that the work commissioned by the UNCCD would serve as a useful starting point for the eventual development of a common concept and measurement for land degradation.*

4. A second presentation by Mr. Massimiliano of UNDP provided an overview of the key areas of work of the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN). Biodiversity expenditure review, which provides analysis of public and private expenditures affecting biodiversity, is an area relevant to the work on SEEA implementation. UNDP suggested possible ways forward are to: 1) align underlying methodology developed by BIOFIN and SEEA; 2) develop information sharing, synergies and joint activities in countries where the Government has started the SEEA implementation, and 3) develop joint proposals with the implementation of biodiversity finance plan and the longer-term capacity development on SEEA implementation.

5. *Members of the Committee stressed the usefulness of cooperation between the budget office and the national statistics office, and pointed out the importance of having a classification system of environmental activities that is internationally aligned and comparable. Recognizing the development of a standard approach of such classification takes time, and it was suggested that any guidance developed in the near short term could be viewed as provisional. It was recommended that an expert group be created to bring the biodiversity community and statisticians together, so as to develop a common methodology on such classifications.*

## Water

6. William Reidhead from UN-Water presented GEMI, an initiative between seven international organizations who are members of UN-Water, with the aim of monitoring SDG 6 on Water in an integrated way. GEMI aims to integrate and expand existing monitoring efforts for water, enhance capacity for water monitoring in countries, develop methodological guides to support monitoring, and inform the SDG reporting framework. GEMI operates under four key principles: ensuring integrated data; working towards harmonization between agencies, in particular on definitions and concepts of internationally agreed standards; adopting a progressive monitoring approach based on monitoring ladders; and progressively working towards data disaggregation. GEMI has developed draft methodological guidelines for each indicator, which will now be tested in six pilot countries in parallel to undergoing an expert review process. The goal of the country pilots is not to develop baseline data – but rather to improve the methodological guides.

7. GEMI is working towards alignment of their methodological guides with the SEEA, and efforts will be made to coordinate this work with UNSD. While progress has been made on this issues, key alignment issues remain, including: 1) Use of the term ‘productivity’ vs. ‘efficiency’ for indicator 6.4.1; 2) Measuring water use by sector (using ISIC) rather than having a measurement for the entire economy (currently these two approaches are not the same as data is incomplete); 3) Concerns about how to treat rain-fed agriculture and water use for hydropower; and 4) Developing clarity in the use of terms, particularly with regards to water withdrawal/abstraction, water use and water consumption.

8. The Committee welcomed the presentation, stressing the importance of ensuring alignment with internationally agreed standards to ensure comparability and clear agreement on terms which is important for communication purposes. The Committee noted that the OECD-Eurostat Questionnaire and the UNSD-UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics already collect most of the data needed to monitor the GEMI indicators. The Committee recommended that this data should be used as a starting point, as many of the methodological issues encountered when collecting such data have already been discussed and resolved. The Committee encouraged GEMI to use and develop common tools endorsed by the Committee for capacity building, so as to ensure a common approach when working in countries. The European Environment Agency also noted that they publish a water exploitation index, which draws on sources from line ministries that complement the OECD Eurostat Questionnaire. The methodological approach has undergone a review process to align with SEEA, and the European Environment Agency would be happy to share those experiences with GEMI.

9. The Committee encouraged GEMI to work with the Technical Committee on SEEA Central Framework to harmonize the GEMI framework with the SEEA, to collect data through common tools such as the existing OECD/Eurostat and UNSD-UNEP Questionnaires on the Environment, and to use common capacity building tools.

## Material Flow Accounts

10. In the first presentation UNEP noted that it will lead the work on 10 out of 12 of the MFA related SDG indicators; there are close links between the indicators and in some case they are the same. The focus is on material footprint and domestic material production. Various agencies have data for various regions, and this data is brought together at UNEPLive. Moving forward, there is a need to increase capacity in countries and NSOs to provide more official information on both MFA data and input data used in MFA modeling. The second presentation by OECD provided an overview of the work done at OECD on MFA. There are two main streams of work, material flows and resource productivity. A database is available with relevant MFA data from countries. Methodological guidance is also available. Future work at OECD in this area will focus on demand based measures of material flows. The last

presentation from Eurostat noted that regular collection of data from countries is underway. Key indicators are being produced and there are a number of methodological publications available for those interested in how to compile MFA.

11. Members of the Committee noted the importance of using already available data and international databases. There is a need for transparency in the data included in the international databases, especially when modeling is used and the data presented is different from national data. Transparency, along with SEEA compliance of MFA, helps increase credibility and use of data. Members also noted the need for clear methodological guidance on certain boundary issues.

12. The Committee also discussed the use of models in compiling MFA. Members noted that input data should be SEEA compliant (in that, among others, it follows the principles, classifications and scope of the SEEA). There are a number of challenges in using modeling, including differences in the models used, reliability of the input data, and communication of modeling results to users. Finally members of the Committee discussed the frequency and timeliness of producing MFA, noting the usefulness of models in the intermediate years where data is not available.

13. The Committee recommended that international organizations take the development of data exchange and establishment of global databases for MFA data forward.

### **Sustainable Tourism**

14. UN-WTO presented efforts being undertaken to use an accounting framework to measure sustainable tourism. Tourism is an important potential contributor to sustainable development, but it requires good planning and management to avoid environmental destruction. Tourism currently has two international statistical frameworks; the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics (2008) and the Tourism Satellite Account (2008). There has to date been little development of tourism statistics beyond the economic sphere, but the international frameworks in place recommend linking tourism and sustainability as a priority. There is also a need to go beyond the national perspective to the sub-national level. UN-WTO's ambition is to develop a statistical framework for sustainable tourism that provides a means of integrating environmental, economic and social information as it pertains to tourism. The necessary information is largely available, but it needs to be organized in a way that is coherent with how we measure environmental and economic activity. To this end, UN-WTO and UNSD have set up a working group and are writing an issue paper on specific technical issues encountered in this work.

15. The Committee noted that as tourism is a very local issue, SEEA Ecosystem Accounting offers a good opportunity to consider issues related to tourism at the sub-national. UN-WTO's initiative undertaken in collaboration with UNSD is therefore an important contribution to highlight the application of SEEA Ecosystem Accounting in a spatial dimension. The Committee also noted that tourism accounting should take care to incorporate national infrastructure (e.g. roads, waste processing plants, etc.) as a key issue.

16. The Committee encouraged its members to actively participate in the upcoming meeting organized by UN-WTO to advance the development of the sustainable tourism accounting framework, including the incorporation of an ecosystem perspective at sub-national level, for use in the development of a technical note on "SEEA tourism".

# Management Meeting

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## OPENING AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

17. Stefan Schweinfest, Director of UNSD, welcomed Committee members to the management meeting. He noted that the SDG indicators have been high on the agenda this year, and that the Statistical Commission has worked hard to develop a preliminary indicator framework. The policy agenda is broad and interconnected, which makes integrated information systems a very important component of the statistical response to support an integrated approach. Information systems which analyze the connections between the various elements of the policy agenda, and which assess synergies and tradeoffs must be developed. The SEEA therefore has an important role to play. However, more must be done to properly communicate the value of the SEEA, and reaffirm that it is not only a framework for developed statistical systems, but also one which can support statistical systems in developing countries. As such, the Committee must focus its resources on communication, advocacy, training and capacity building.

18. Mr. Schweinfest stressed the need to work strategically and jointly to ensure our ambitious agenda is reached, and noted that the UNCEEA has an important and influential role to play. The Statistical Commission has delegated more authority to the Committee through its decision to adopt the SEEA as the overarching statistical standard and delegate the adoption of future SEEA subsystems as internationally agreed methodological documents in support of the SEEA to the UNCEEA.

## SESSION 3A: SEEA CENTRAL FRAMEWORK RESEARCH AGENDA

### Outcomes and Actions

The UNCEEA;

- Welcomed the updated research agenda and requested the Technical Committee on the SEEA Central Framework to develop a set of criteria to prioritize the research issues. These criteria may be based on implementation priorities, relevance to the SDGs, work already under way, etc.
- Identified conceptual priorities: Classifications, Integrated Framework for Environmental Activity Accounts and Valuation Techniques (where a list of possible methods and practical guidance on their application should be developed, and links to Ecosystems should also be made)
- Identified implementation priorities: Input-Output Techniques, Economy Wide Material Flow Accounting and DSDs for SDMX (which will also support the SDG process)
- Suggested additional research issues: Sustainable tourism, links to BIOFIN, nuclear energy, the circular use rate and links between SEEA and climate change related statistics.
- Called for more transparent coordination and sharing of the work on the research agenda, for which a knowledge platform should be considered on the UN SEEA website.
- Recognized the need to have climate change high on the research agenda of future work of Committee. To be consistent with the mandate of the UNECE Task Force and the role of SEEA in informing global policy frameworks, full consistency between key indicators and SEEA should be realized, where relevant on a dual measurement and reporting basis. This research could result in a contribution to the broader work of the Statistical Commission on climate change.

- Considered important to formally communicate conceptual clarifications and updates on the SEEA, for which a ‘SEEA News and Notes’ could be considered as an appropriate communication tool.
- Requested the chair of the Technical Committee on the SEEA Central Framework to update the research agenda on the basis of the proposals of the UNCEEA, and develop and apply criteria to determine priorities.
- Requested members who proposed new items for the research agenda to submit a paragraph on the issue to the Technical Committee on the SEEA Central Framework.
- Recommended that the Chair of the Technical Committee will coordinate advancement of the Research Agenda and group discussion of key methodological and implementation issues with the Chair of the London Group.

## Summary of Discussion

19. Mr. Gerard Eding of Statistics Netherlands presented an updated research agenda on behalf of Sjoerd Schenau, the Chair of the Technical Committee of the SEEA Central Framework. The list of research issues which were included in the agenda was updated and broken down into conceptual and implementation issues. Mr. Eding also presented a proposal for the allocation of work between groups and a proposed timeline, noting that the London Group should play an important role as a forum to discuss, present and refine research issues. Mr. Eding also noted that the Committee should develop a way of dealing with changes, reinterpretations and clarifications of the SEEA handbook as implementation progresses, and suggested a ‘SEEA news and notes’ such as the one used for the SNA, as a way of recording and making public said progress.

20. The Committee welcomed the updated research agenda, noting that overlaps may exist with the SEEA-EEA research agenda on land and valuation, and with the SEEA AFF research agenda on land based accounting and air emissions. Given capacity constraints the Committee urged relevant groups to find synergies, and suggested that issues related to land be addressed in the SEEA EEA research agenda. The Committee noted that in the case of valuation, overlaps between the Central Framework and Ecosystem Accounting exist, but the adoption of the SEEA Central Framework as a standard was contingent on outstanding valuation issues being addressed. As such, valuation work should be maintained as part of the SEEA Central Framework research agenda.

21. The Committee noted that the number of research issues and timeline is very ambitious and there is clearly a need to prioritize. Criteria for deciding priorities should be developed and could include; 1) whether the issue is blocking implementation right now, 2) whether the issue is a critical one to resolve if SEEA is to be used to measure an SDG indicator, and 3) whether existing work is already underway, can bear fruit, or if past efforts have failed to resolve the issue. The Committee also noted that in order to effectively advance the research agenda, ownership of specific issues needs to be taken by different people. Issue notes should be written by lead agencies/people for review and discussion at the London Group. The Technical Committee should coordinate this with the Chair of the London Group and lead agencies for specific research issues.

22. Italy and UN-ECE presented the work on Climate Change related statistics and in particular the ongoing work of the Conference of European Statistician Task Force on a set of key climate change related statistics and indicators. This work is especially relevant:

- Due to the fact that it will form the starting point for a global initiative on measuring climate change as per a UNSC decision in 2016

- Because it identifies additional issues for the SEEA research agenda, such as the definition of adaptation expenditures
- For all indicators that can be derived also from other sources than SEEA a dual measurement should be foreseen in the short term. This is consistent with the ongoing process on aligning SDG indicators with SEEA

23. The UNCEEA recognized the importance of the work and concluded to have climate change high on the agenda of future work of UNCEEA. Specifically, this discussion should include the use of SEEA in the compilation of climate change indicators and also the use of the SEEA as analytical framework which can be used for climate change related analysis. To be consistent with the mandate of the Task Force and the role of SEEA in informing global policy frameworks every effort should be made to ensure full consistency between key indicators and SEEA. Since the work has a long-term perspective current lack of data from SEEA should not be the reason to exclude SEEA as a reference framework. This could result in a contribution to the broader work of the UNSC.

## **SESSION 3B: SEEA EXPERIMENTAL ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTING**

### **Outcomes and Actions**

The UNCEEA;

- Stressed the importance and critical role played by NSOs in the testing and the development of the SEEA-EEA, particularly in view of its coordinating role and ability to bring various stakeholders together
- Acknowledged the importance of linking SEEA EEA to other international processes, including the SDGs and the initiative on climate change statistics
- Endorsed the updated SEEA EEA research agenda, considered the proposed list of research topics to be exhaustive and complete and stressed the importance of drawing synergies with the research agenda of the SEEA Central Framework
- Suggested additional research issues: The development of modular linked classifications of ecosystem types /assets, ecosystem services and beneficiaries
- Identified priorities for the research agenda;
  - Spatial units and their delineations
  - Indicators of ecosystem condition
  - Selection and measurement of ecosystem services including ecosystem services classifications
  - Articulation of the links between ecosystem assets (and their conditions) and the supply of ecosystem services
  - Valuation of ecosystem services and assets, and relating market land values to ecosystem asset values
- Took note of the willingness expressed by some Committee members to contribute to the research agenda on ecosystem accounting



- Asked the editorial board of the Technical Recommendations on SEEA EEA to continue its work until the Technical Committee on the SEEA EEA is operational
- Agreed to the timeline for updating the SEEA EEA by 2020, but noted it is ambitious with the drafting of the update of the SEEA EEA to commence in 2018
- Agreed that an editor was needed for drafting the update of the SEEA EEA and recognized that there was an issue of funding,
  - A member of the Bureau of the Committee to be identified by the chair will look into the issue of funding in order to ensure that the project can proceed expediently
  - Requested UNSD and the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting Editorial Board to update the research agenda and develop a list of issues
  - Requested UNSD to establish the Technical Committee on SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting

## Summary of Discussion

24. Mr. Anton Steurer of Eurostat presented an updated research agenda on the SEEA EEA and the way forward to revise the SEEA EEA by 2020. In addition, he reported on the outcomes of the expert meeting on classifications and the work progress on the SEEA EEA Technical Recommendations during the session.

25. The Committee stressed the important and critical role played by NSOs in the testing and the development of the SEEA EEA, suggesting the key strengths that the NSOs can contribute to the testing and development of the SEEA EEA are: statistical knowledge of the SNA, geospatial information and data structures; understanding of integration; strong institutional support in data production; the power to bring in stakeholders; and the ability to produce impartial statistics. The Committee further recognized the clear need for coordination at the country level, and recommended NSOs play a leading role in bringing stakeholders together to advance the testing of the SEEA EEA at country level.

26. The Committee also recognized that there is a clear need for international coordination for the testing and the development of the SEEA EEA, and acknowledged the importance of linking SEEA EEA to other international processes, including the SDGs and the initiative on climate change statistics.

27. With regard to the updated research agenda of the SEEA, each of the following topics was recommended by at least three members of Committee as a priority: 1) Spatial units and their delineations; 2) indicators of ecosystem condition; 3) selection and measurement of ecosystem services, and the role of the different ecosystem services classifications; 4) articulation of the links between ecosystem assets (and their conditions) and the supply of ecosystem services; 5) valuation of ecosystem services and assets, and 6) relating market land values to ecosystem asset values. The Committee took note of the willingness expressed by some Committee members, including ABS, EEA, Eurostat, FAO and Statistics Netherlands, to contribute to the research agenda on ecosystem accounting

## **SESSION 3C: SEEA SUBSYSTEMS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS SUPPORTING THE SEEA IMPLEMENTATION**

### Outcomes and Actions

The UNCEEAA;

- Welcomed the work on SEEA Energy and SEEA Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- Endorsed SEEA Energy as the internationally agreed methodological document for energy accounts in support of the SEEA Central Framework, which is the international statistical standard for environmental economic accounting, subject to the inclusions of specific, non-substantive comments to be provided by members of the Committee.
- Endorsed SEEA Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries as the internationally agreed methodological document for agriculture, forestry and fisheries accounts in support of the SEEA Central Framework, which is the international statistical standard, subject to the inclusions of specific, non-substantive comments to be provided by members of the Committee.
- Requested UNSD to update the background document on the typology of publications supporting the SEEA implementation to reflect the status of SEEA subsystems and replace the old document on the website
- Requested Members of the Committee to submit comments on the SEEA Energy and SEEA Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries to UNSD and FAO respectively by 11 July 2016
- Requested UNSD to finalize SEEA Energy and FAO to finalize the SEEA Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

## Summary of Discussion

28. In its presentation, UNSD briefed the Committee on the decision of the UN Statistical Commission to request that the UNCEEA finalize SEEA Energy and SEEA Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. The Committee was also briefed on an updated typology of documents in support of the SEEA.

29. In the follow up discussions, members agreed with the proposal to endorse SEEA Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and SEEA Energy as internationally agreed methodological documents in support of the SEEA Central Framework. Members also agreed on a number of other outcomes related to this item as listed above.

## SESSION 4A: DEFINING AND MONITORING TARGETS FOR 2020 IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### Outcomes and Actions

The UNCEEA;

- Agreed that a Global Assessment should be run in 2017 and again in 2020 to assess progress towards the implementation strategy targets
- Recommended the following definition of the 'SEEA being implemented in a country' – *A SEEA Account must have been compiled and published at least once, and structural (i.e. regular budget) funds must have been allocated for repeat compilation and publication*
- Requested a review of the current global assessment and proposed to include questions on the number of staff working on environmental-economic accounts , regular budget funding and public release of the accounts
- Requested that with consent, countries' responses to the Global Assessment are made public, and that links to countries' published work are provided on an online portal

- Recommended that the approximately 30 more countries out of the 100 countries targeted for the SEEA Central framework, which are needed to meet the implementation targets by 2020 be identified using the Global Assessment, also drawing on outreach and capacity building work done by regional bodies
- Requested UNSD to update the Global Assessment in consultation with UNCEEA members for a 2017 round, and make the responses of the 2014 round public.
- Requested the Bureau of the UNCEEA along with UNSD to use the results of the Global Assessment to identify countries to reach out to in order to meet implementation targets

## Summary of Discussion

30. Following her presentation of the implementation strategy, Ms. Alfieri of UNSD asked the Committee to consider how implementation of the SEEA should be monitored, and in particular what the parameters should be for a country to be considered as having 'implemented the SEEA'. Ms. Alfieri also noted that the Statistical Commission had endorsed the implementation strategy in principle, and the implementation strategy will be updated and finalized based on the outcomes of this meeting.

31. The Committee noted that there are two key criteria to define implementation; allocation of regular budget money to a SEEA program, and publication of country SEEA-Accounts.

32. The Committee suggested that the Global Assessment should be run every three years (with one in 2017 and one in 2020) to monitor progress against the implementation strategy. The questionnaire should be shortened and simplified, and regional commissions should assist in ensuring feedback is received from countries. Following each assessment, the responses provided by countries should be made public in an online portal. Information from the Global Assessment (such as links to national publications and examples of uses of SEEA data) should also be fed into an online information sharing platform.

33. The Committee noted that the target of 100 countries by 2020 for the implementation of the SEEA CF is ambitious given that the 2014 Global Assessment found that 54 countries have a program on the SEEA and a further 15 have plans for implementation. That means roughly another 30 countries are needed if the target is to be met by 2020. UNECE and Eurostat efforts in Eastern Europe, as well as the World Bank WAVES program, are all important initiatives to achieve this target. Countries which would potentially implement the SEEA in the next 5 years should be explicitly identified and offered implementation assistance including capacity building. A similar approach should be followed for the target set for 50 countries to implement the SEEA EEA.

## SESSION 4B: CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE SEEA

### Outcomes and Actions

On Statistical production processes and harmonized tools, the UNCEEA;

- Noted that there are differences among countries in the level of development of their statistical systems as well as differences in institutional and statistical capacity and IT infrastructure
- Noted the necessity of using many data sources including administrative sources in populating the accounts; and further noted the need to coordinate with data providers to make an effort that data is collected and processed in a manner that allows for easy integration into the accounts

- Requested that in the short term, tools, practices and other useful documents on the statistical production processes and institutional arrangements for SEEA accounts are shared on a common, centralized platform for ease of access.
- Noted that while software and other IT tools can be useful in the production of accounts, care should be taken to ensure that such tools are properly used and that institutional knowledge is not undermined.

On training and capacity building, the UNCEEA;

- Requested that module-specific courses be developed, in particular for priority areas such as water, energy, land and ecosystems
- Called for coordination between various international organizations, regional commissions and regional training centers in developing and delivering standard training and capacity building materials at introductory, intermediate and advance levels to meet the different levels of statistical development of the countries
- Noted the importance of practical numerical examples in the module-specific courses and emphasized the need to incorporate realistic exercises in the training courses, e.g. using data in global databases
- Requested that existing regional statistical training institutions are engaged in the delivery of the SEEA related courses on a structural basis
- Requested that a knowledge repository is created to host relevant training materials including case studies and online tutorials
- Reaffirmed that the series of SEEA technical notes on the various modules play an important role in training and data collection by providing short introductions to the various SEEA modules and the related core tables and combined presentations for compilation and dissemination
- Stressed that training and capacity building at country level requires: Courses on a particular module; understanding the statistical production process and institutional arrangements for the particular module; hands-on work with national source data and collaboration with partners
- Noted that available technical experts to assist countries in the compilation of the various SEEA modules is limited; sharing of implementation practices and lessons learnt should be included in the knowledge repository
- Requested UNSD will develop an E-learning course on SEEA water, energy and ecosystems.
- Requested a member of the Bureau to be selected by the chair will conduct an assessment of available training and compilation materials
- Requested a member of the Bureau to be selected by the chair will begin to engage regional training institutions
- Requested UNSD along with other members of the UNCEEA and Technical Committee to finalize the outstanding technical notes

## Summary of Discussion

34. As an introduction to the topics for discussion, two presentations were made on capacity building and harmonization tools. The presentations focused on the request from the UNSC for training and capacity building on the SEEA. A number of questions were raised in each presentation; the questions were discussed in breakout groups. The groups reported the conclusions to their discussion back to the full Committee, as recorded below.

35. **Breakout Groups on Harmonized tools:** Discussants noted that when compiling SEEA accounts there might be a need to have a different model from the SNA given the large number of institutions involved and the many data sources required. It was noted that there is a need to share good practices widely and international organizations can play a key role in disseminating good practices and tools that have proved useful by creating a central repository to share good practices, tools and other useful documents. Members noted that while standard tools are useful for training purposes, they might not necessarily be the best for compilation purposes given the variety of national circumstances. It was further noted that there is a need to reach out and work closely with data providers, in particular those who collect administrative data, to help facilitate the use of already collected data for the accounts.

36. **Breakout Groups on Training and Capacity Building:** Members reiterated the need for training and capacity building in a coordinated fashion and close collaboration between various actors including regional training centers. Members noted the usefulness of modular based training, prioritizing the development of water, energy and ecosystem courses. While training courses play a crucial role in building capacity, they are only the first step in building capacity and there is a need for follow up guidance in compiling the accounts, especially given the differing national circumstances. In this regard, having online tutorials and practical examples as parts of a central knowledge repository were deemed to be useful in sharing best practices and building capacity.

37. Building on this, members proposed a simplified model for in country capacity building. The first step is to have courses and other training on topics/modules that are relevant to the country/sub-region. This is followed up by learning about the statistical production process in step two. Once there is a clear plan in place on how to go about building the particular account, the NSO in collaboration with national and international partners should work on bringing the data together and compiling the accounts. Lastly, results are published and lessons learned are shared, including sharing the relevant document for posting in the central repository. Members noted that as countries go through these steps, it would be helpful to have a central help desk (for example an online forum) for questions to experts from other countries.

## SESSION 4C: SEEA AND SDGS

### Outcomes and Actions

The UNCEEA;

- Reiterated that it is important to connect the SEEA with the SDG indicator framework and to demonstrate that SEEA compliant data and metadata are applicable for a number of the SDG indicators.
- Stressed that the UNCEEA members should step up their contributions to the inclusion of SEEA compliant data and metadata in the formulation of Tier 1, 2 and 3 indicators of the SDG indicators framework. The Committee agreed that it should work closely with custodian agencies of the indicators to ensure the conceptual framework of the SEEA is applied, including for dual measurement and reporting purposes, as relevant.
- Recognized the ongoing work of a Conference of European Statistician Task Force on a set of key climate change related statistics and indicators. For indicators that can be derived also from other sources than SEEA accounts such as national green-house gas emission inventories, a dual measurement and reporting is foreseen. This is consistent with the ongoing process on aligning SDG indicators with SEEA in other statistical domains.

- Noted that it is the responsibility of the whole Committee to make the argument for the SEEA, providing proof of the value of the SEEA as an internationally agreed statistical framework, and illustrating how the SEEA can help to provide integration across the indicators of the SDG goals and targets.
- Reflected on the SDG process and suggested that a strategic approach is articulated to influence it.
- Requested a small subgroup of the UNCEEA members (to include Sweden, Germany, Philippines, Mexico, Netherlands, Australia, UNSD and FAO) to develop a strategy to promote the SEEA in the SDGs as well in the climate change statistics work.

## Summary of Discussion

38. Members of the Committee who sit on the IAEG-SDGs informed the Committee that the UNCEEA's recommendations on aligning SDG indicators with the SEEA were not fully taken on board largely because UN agencies took the lead in developing the indicator recommendations. The IAEG members were flooded with information – a number of other communities had also submitted recommendations and the IAEG could not properly process them all in the time given. The IAEG members recommended that the Committee work directly with the custodian agencies of the SDG indicators to ensure that the SEEA is reflected. It is the custodian agencies working in close consultation with a limited number of countries being both members of the UNCEEA and the IAEG, who should advance the use of the SEEA and ensure that the metadata of the SDG indicators are aligned with the SEEA. Members of the Committee also noted that the Committee would benefit from focusing their efforts on a small number of SEEA relevant indicators for which progress can be made in ensuring alignment. In addition, the climate change goal is currently phrased in such a way that there are very few statistics to back it up. This is a one area for the Committee to demonstrate the value of the SEEA.

39. The Committee agreed that the Committee must step up efforts to communicate the value of using the SEEA for SDG purposes. Demonstrations and proof of concept must be provided to illustrate how the SEEA can provide a framework to construct and integrate indicators which are robust and comparable. It must be stressed that the SEEA allows us to connect across goals and integrate measurement.

40. The Committee agreed that the focus should be on ensuring the metadata and methodologies for the SDG indicators are SEEA compliant (rather than on indicator names). The methodologies for the indicators are still being developed, and there is a lot of room for the Committee to influence the process. UNEP noted that they are the custodians for 30 indicators, and for many of these indicators the methodologies are still in the beginning phase. There is scope and appetite for the SEEA to be integrated in UNEP's work. The Committee also noted that the custodian agencies for the SEEA relevant indicators are, in large part, also members of the UNCEEA. It is therefore important that these members of the Committee take an active role in advancing uptake of the SEEA within their agencies.

41. The Committee agreed that a more tactical approach to influencing the SDG process must be made in the future, and recommended that a small subgroup of the Committee should develop this approach and bring it to the Bureau for discussion. The Committee appreciated that UNSD cannot drive this work alone, and that it cannot be the sole responsibility of the Committee members who sit on the IAEG-SDGs to ensure the uptake of SEEA methodology.

## SESSION 4D: DATA COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION

### Outcomes and Actions

The UNCEEA;

- Reiterated the importance of developing international SEEA-based datasets based on existing global datasets and established international cooperation arrangements
- Agreed that a pragmatic approach should be taken starting with a small set of priority accounts and progressively increasing the number of accounts and level of detail to provide a coherent information set to support integrated policies, including SDGs
- Acknowledged the role of UNCEEA to coordinate the work on international SEEA-based data compilation and dissemination
- Suggested that economy-wide material flows, energy and air emissions accounts be given priority along with water and land accounts to provide the appropriate balance of relevance to developed and developing countries alike
- Recommended the development of templates for the SEEA-based data compilation and dissemination, recognizing that the core accounts and combined presentations in the SEEA technical notes could serve as useful starting points
- Established a small group of Committee members (Eurostat, FAO, OECD, UNEP, UNSD and other countries and agencies that have expressed willingness to contribute) to work with the UNCEEA Bureau to develop a roadmap and identify lead agencies in advancing the international SEEA-based data compilation and dissemination for the priority accounts

### Summary of Discussion

42. In her presentation, Ms. Myriam Linster of OECD explained the purpose, expectations, and requirements for the global compilation and dissemination of SEEA-based datasets, and presented the suggested way forward in setting priorities and arrangements for the global compilation of SEEA-based data. The Committee reiterated the importance of developing international SEEA-based datasets based on existing global datasets as part of an effort to monitor progress on the SEEA implementation, support international policy including the SDGs, and provide harmonized international data for policy applications at national and international level. Members voiced concern on the resource implications of the project, and agreed that a pragmatic approach should be taken starting with a small set of priority accounts and progressively increasing the number of accounts and level of detail to provide a coherent information set to support integrated policies, including the SDGs.

43. On international coordination and collaboration, the Committee acknowledged the important role of UNCEEA, stressing the importance of coordination among different lead agencies. It was suggested that existing arrangements and thematic groups at the international level could be utilized to complement the work. It was also suggested that UNCEEA can reflect on and learn from other similar global initiatives to move forward with the planning.

44. The Committee considered policy relevance, data availability and resource implications as the main criteria for setting priorities. Economy-wide material flows, energy and air emissions accounts were considered as low hanging fruits where global SEEA-based datasets on these accounts could be developed in short-term due to the availability of existing international data inventory, methods and practices. Water and land accounts were also recommended as priorities because of their policy relevance to developing countries.

45. Members from developing countries pointed out the lack of resources and practical guidance on building a SEEA database at the national level, and highlighted the importance of the development of data templates for the national compilation of SEEA accounts in developing countries. It was pointed out that the core accounts and combined presentations in the SEEA technical notes and accounting tables published by developed countries could serve as useful starting points. In this regard it requested UNSD to complete the technical notes in close consultation with the technical committee of the SEEA CF.

46. The urgency of developing a global SEEA database was noted. The Committee recommended the establishment of a small group under the auspices of the UNCEEA to develop a proposal on the way forward for the global compilation of SEEA-based data. Eurostat, FAO, OECD, UNEP and UNSD expressed willingness to be part of this small group.

## **SESSION 5: INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION**

### **Outcomes and Actions**

The UNCEEA;

- Agreed that it is the responsibility of the UNCEEA to ensure coordination among the various groups and international agencies. Transparency in the current work being undertaken by various groups and agencies and timelines of deliverables should be improved. This will allow for a bottom up approach to identifying tasks and timelines of the various groups and agencies. A virtual workspace should be developed to facilitate communication and sharing of work. A Bureau member should be appointed to ensure that each group works in complementary fashion avoiding overlaps.
- Agreed that it is the UNCEEA's role to oversee coordination on SEEA data reporting, and appreciated that relevant agencies (OECD, UNEP, FAO, Eurostat and UNSD) work together in a collaborative way. Transparency and a clear delegation of responsibilities is needed, and progress should be reported to the UNCEEA
- Agreed that standardized training materials for the introductory and intermediate level courses for SEEA CF is desirable. Flexibility at the more advance level is needed in particular for hands-on in-country training using numerical examples based on countries' data taking into account country specificities such as the national institutional arrangements and various statistical production process
- Requested that an assessment of existing training material be made, to identify what is missing and find a way to share existing resources. A Bureau member should be appointed to undertake this work.
- Requested that a record of international organization's SEEA related work in countries is made, kept up to date and shared online, in particular for the member agencies of the UNCEEA. This record is to be established and updated in collaboration with the regional commissions
- Stressed the importance of having a central knowledge repository to bring together quality practice material for training and capacity building. A collaborative website should be developed to work as a one-stop-shop, enhance transparency and facilitate cooperation
- Requested the Chair of the UNCEEA to identify a Bureau member for each of the following tasks:  
1) Ensuring different methodological groups work in a complementary fashion, and 2) Undertaking an assessment of existing training material



## Summary of Discussion

47. Statistics Canada introduced a number of key coordination issues for discussion, noting that a large number of groups are involved in SEEA related work, which is welcomed but increases the risk of overlaps and mis-coordination. There are a number of international groups set up, and many of them have overlapping mandates. The UNCEEA has a mandate to play an umbrella coordinating function in this landscape, and so there is a need to consider how the UNCEEA can improve coordination in three key areas; Methodological development, data reporting and capacity building.

48. On methodological development, there is a small number of experts and overlapping membership of the technical groups. The Committee agreed that no more groups should be set up to deal with methodological development, and that improved transparency is needed on the make-up and work program of existing groups. The Chair of the London Group noted that a two year work program has been developed for the London Group, and that it would be useful if the Technical Committee of the SEEA Central Formwork were to also provide a work program. This would allow the two groups to work together to ensure that questions and research issues that would benefit from exposure to a larger group of experts are fed by the Technical Committee into the London Group meetings. The Committee recommended that a virtual workspace should be set up to facilitate improved communication and sharing of information. The Committee also recommended that somebody from the UNCEEA Bureau should take a leading role in guiding the setting of priorities and allocation of tasks set between different working groups.

49. On data reporting, there is a need to ensure that SEEA-based data collection and dissemination efforts are coordinated to minimize response burdens on countries. The Committee agreed that a number of tools could be developed to facilitate the use of existing data to derive accounts, but responsibility has to be taken by Committee members to drive this work. In particular, a tool to use the energy balances to derive energy accounts could be developed based on current practices with a tool developed by Eurostat.

50. It would also be beneficial to consider existing water data from the OECD-Eurostat and UNSD-UNEP questionnaires, and construct a methodological tool to allow for the use of data in the international databases to derive water accounts. It is currently not clear whether this water data is fully SEEA compliant, so this needs to be tested along with the quality of the data. The Committee recommended that FAO, Eurostat, OECD, UNSD and UNEP work together to coordinate data reporting initiatives, and report progress back to the Committee. The Committee indicated that no formal groups need to be formed to advance this work. The Committee also recommended an adaptive management approach to coordination, and highlighted the need for clear agreement of a set of actions and deliverables with a delegation of responsibilities among international agencies.

51. On technical assistance and capacity building, the Committee noted that a number of organizations have developed training materials, and there is a need to improve coordination and ensure these materials are easily accessible for countries. The Committee agreed that training material can be standardized for basic concepts, and there is enough existing material that should just be bought together and made accessible. For more advanced training where you start working with countries' data and internal practices, a more flexible approach to training is needed. The Committee noted that it is important that training on the subsystems is bought into a common approach to SEEA CF training. The Committee recommended that a central repository of training material and information is developed, bringing together and sharing quality practice material. The Committee requested that a member of the committee (to be identified by the chair) develop an overview of the existing training material as a first step.

52. Overall the Committee stressed that it is not advisable to develop more groups to assist in coordination efforts. The Committee welcomed the work done by the Secretariat to provide an inventory of current SEEA related initiatives, and asked that this exercise be repeated annually. The Committee also stressed the importance of having a central repository to facilitate coordination, both in order to advance methodological development, to improve coordination and the availability of training and capacity building materials.

## SESSION 6: UNCEEA

### Outcomes and Actions

The UNCEEA;

- Agreed to adopt a new organizational structure for the UNCEEA meeting (with a 1-day seminar segment and a 2-day management segment); noted the usefulness of cover notes and breakout sessions to guide discussions; requested that more concrete, decision focused proposals are included in the cover notes
- Requested that Bureau members take an active role in making progress in the various work streams of the Committee; in particular the Bureau members are to facilitate the efforts on behalf of the Committee in the various work streams of the UNCEEA's work programme to support the Secretariat, i.e. SDGs, training and capacity building, research agenda of the SEEA CF and the SEEA EEA, data and coordination
- Requested that the Bureau meet at a higher frequency (i.e. quarterly) and that the relevant documents and decisions from Bureau meetings are shared with the members of the Committee
- Reconfirmed the UNCEEA meetings are strategic and managerial in nature and therefore detailed technical discussions should be delegated to other groups such as the London Group and the SEEA CF and SEEA EEA Technical Committees, with the outcomes of the technical considerations be brought to the Committee for decision.

### Summary of Discussion

53. The Chair of the Committee provided an overview of the role of the Committee and its responsibilities as laid out in its terms of reference. In particular, the work programme of the Committee focuses on 5 areas of work:

- Ensure coordination, integration and complementarity among programmes in environmental-economic accounting and related statistics
- Encourage the use of environmental-economic accounting in countries
- Further methodologies in environmental-economic accounting and statistics
- Advance the implementation of the SEEA
- Harmonize of data collection activities

54. The Chair noted that the Committee works closely with a number of technical bodies such as the London Group and the SEEA Technical Committees, and with international organizations. As such, it is to have an umbrella function and provide overall vision, coordination, prioritization and direction in the field of environmental-economic accounting and related statistics. At the conclusion of the presentation

by the Chair, Committee members were invited to provide their views on the organization of the UNCEEA, content of the work programme and the role of the UNCEEA and its Bureau.

55. Members expressed their appreciation for the organization of the meeting. They noted the usefulness of having the meeting split into the seminar portion (1 day) and management portion (2 days); the same structure should be kept for future meetings. Furthermore, the cover notes and other relevant papers were made available in a timely fashion; the information provided in the notes was useful in framing the discussion. Members requested that cover notes be used as appropriate in future meeting; the notes should include more concrete proposals and be decision focused. Members noted that having breakout sessions helps further discussion.

56. The Committee also discussed the need for members to step up their involvement in the various work streams of the committee with emphasis on the work on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, members or groups of members should lead the work on the various components of the work programme. The Bureau should also take an active role in facilitating the work need to be completed. It should meet on a regular basis to discuss progress and give guidance where necessary. Members noted the need for relevant documents and outcomes of Bureau meetings to be shared with the whole Committee on a regular basis.

57. Given the urgency, members discussed how to best place the SEEA in the SDG process. It was noted that there is a need to reach out to the various lead/custodian agencies to lobby for the inclusion of SEEA compliant indicators; the work on metadata is another area where Committee members can influence the SDG process. Members agreed that the UNCEEA should work closely with other organizations, in particular UNEP and the various Conventions, to draft relevant papers that advocate for the use of the SEEA in the framing of SDGs.

## ANNEX I: SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Topic	Task	Responsible Agency
<b>SEEA Central Framework</b>	Update research agenda on the basis of the proposals of the UNCEEA	Sjoerd Schenau and Gerard Eding (Statistics Netherlands) with UNECE and other members
<b>SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting</b>	Update research agenda and develop list of issues	UNSD + Editorial Board
	Establish the Technical Committee	UNSD
	Find funding for an editor	Bureau of the UNCEEA
<b>SEEA Subsystems</b>	Update the document on the typology	UNSD
<i>SEEA Energy</i>	Finalize the manual	UNSD
<i>SEEA Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries</i>	Finalize the manual	FAO
<b>Global Assessment</b>	Update for 2017 round based on UNCEEA recommendations	UNSD in consultation with UNCEEA members
	Make responses public for the 2014 round	UNSD
	Identify countries to reach out to so as to meet the implementation targets	UNSD and the Bureau of the UNCEEA
<b>Capacity Building</b>	Development of E-learning on water energy and ecosystems	UNSD
	Assessment of available training and compilation materials	Member of the Bureau selected by the Chair
	Engage regional training institutions	Member of the Bureau selected by the Chair
	Finalize existing technical notes and develop new ones	UNSD and other members of the UNCEEA and Technical Committees
<b>SEEA and SDGs</b>	Develop a strategy to promote the SEEA in the SDGs as well as in the climate change work	Small group of the UNCEEA: Sweden, Germany, Philippines, Mexico, Netherlands, Australia, UNSD and FAO
<b>Data Compilation</b>	Develop a roadmap and identify lead agencies	Interested agencies and countries (e.g. FAO, UNSD, OECD, Eurostat)
	Develop templates	???
<b>Coordination</b>	Ensure coordination among various groups	Bureau of the UNCEEA
	Maintain the worksheet identifying who is doing what where	Bureau and regional commissions
<b>Website</b>	Develop and update	UNSD