

Fourteenth Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

Review of UNCEEA Membership

I. Introduction

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) has a broad umbrella function in providing overall vision, coordination, prioritisation and direction in the field of environmental-economic accounting and related statistics. In order to effectively carry out its mandate, the Committee is composed of high-level experts from national governments and international organizations active in the field of environmental-economic accounts. To ensure that members of the Committee are engaged in the Committee's work and actively contribute to the programme of work, a periodic evaluation of membership is needed.

This evaluation should not only take into consideration the contribution of current members, but it should also take into consideration the activities and priorities of non-UNCEEA members. As priorities shift, environmental-economic accounting has become a much larger priority in several Member States and international organizations who are not current UNCEEA members. As a result, in recent years, and the Secretariat of the UNCEEA has received multiple requests from new countries and organizations to join the UNCEEA. At the same time, care must be taken to ensure that the UNCEEA remains a manageable size and adheres to its terms of reference in terms of membership.

To facilitate this evaluation, this document reviews the contributions of national governments and international organizations that been part of UNCEEA meetings in the past several years. It also takes into consideration activities of non-UNCEEA members who could potentially contribute to the UNCEEA.

II. Current membership

The [Terms of Reference](#) of the Committee states: *"The selected members of the Committee comprise high-level experts from national governments and international organizations with a broad range of experience in statistics and in the uses of environmental-economic accounts. Members would also be selected so as to ensure equitable regional representation."* The Annex provides a table of current members and attendance to UNCEEA meetings for the past three years (as well as anticipated participation in the 14th Meeting of the UNCEEA). There are currently 27 countries in the

UNCEEA and 17 international/regional organizations in the UNCEEA (excluding UNSD, which serves as Secretariat). Thus far, membership has been implemented in a flexible manner, with the UNCEEA able to accommodate all national statistical organizations and international organizations interested.

Among the 27 countries who are currently members of the UNCEEA, the highest concentration of members is in Europe (33 per cent) and Asia (26 per cent). Africa and Oceania are less well represented (see Table 1 below). More than half of member countries are developing countries (55 per cent). It should also be noted that for all current UNCEEA member countries, representation is from the National Statistical Office.

Table 1. Regional representation

| Region | Number of countries | Percentage |
|----------|---------------------|------------|
| Africa | 3 | 11.1% |
| Americas | 6 | 22.2% |
| Asia | 7 | 25.9% |
| Europe | 9 | 33.3% |
| Oceania | 2 | 7.4% |

The participation of countries in UNCEEA meetings varies widely. Most countries (59.3 per cent) have attended UNCEEA meetings for the last three years and plan to attend the current meeting. Roughly a quarter of countries (25.9 per cent) have attended three out of four of the meetings and some countries (14.8 per cent) have attended only one or two meetings (Table 2). It should be noted that in some cases, countries have only attended one or two meetings because they are relatively new members. Apart from attendance in the UNCEEA meeting, 10 of the 27 member countries actively participate in the UNCEEA Bureau and/or Area Working Groups.

Table 2. Attendance of UNCEEA meetings by member countries

| Number of meetings attended between 2016-2019 | Number of countries | Percentage |
|---|---------------------|------------|
| 0 | 0 | 0% |
| 1 | 2 | 7.4% |
| 2 | 2 | 7.4% |
| 3 | 7 | 25.9% |
| 4 | 16 | 59.3% |

For international/regional organization membership, attendance to UNCEEA meetings varies widely. One organization has not attended in the last four years, and three organizations have only attended once in the past four years. However, as with country attendance, it should be noted that in some cases, organizations have only attended one or two meetings because they are relatively new members. Nine out of the 17 organizations participate in the UNCEEA Bureau and/or Area Working Groups.

Table 3. Attendance of UNCEEA meetings by member organizations

| Number of meetings attended between 2016-2019 | Number of organizations | Percentage |
|---|-------------------------|------------|
| 0 | 1 | 5.9% |
| 1 | 3 | 17.6% |
| 2 | 5 | 29.4% |
| 3 | 2 | 11.8% |
| 4 | 6 | 35.3% |

III. Potential changes to membership

Countries

The above analysis indicates that there is some room for improvement in ensuring that there is equitable regional representation in the UNCEEA. On the other hand, the split between developed and developing member countries is more or less equal. One aspect to take into consideration is the trade-off between equitable regional representation and having countries which have more experience in compilation.

International organizations

There are currently 17 international organizations part of the UNCEEA, comprising nearly 40 per cent of UNCEEA membership. While international organizations have a critical role in supporting the UNCEEA and its mandate, it should be noted that not all international organizations participate equally in the UNCEEA. In addition, while some international organizations represented focus heavily on the SEEA and SEEA-relevant topics, the mandates of other international organizations are more tangentially related.

Non-NSOs and line ministries

UNCEEA country members are currently represented solely through national statistical offices, as the original overarching goal of the UNCEEA was to elevate the SEEA to the level of an international statistical standard. However, as the SEEA has progressed, more and more

countries have begun implementing the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting-Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA), often through their Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Finance or Ministry of Planning.

In addition, as the SEEA has progressed and matured, the UNCEEA has expanded focus to issues such as communication of the accounts and the use of the accounts for policy. Thus, line ministries, both in their capacity as compilers and users of the accounts, could have a potential role in the UNCEEA.

Non-governmental organizations

Lastly, much of the uptake of the SEEA EEA has been driven forward by non-governmental organizations. These non-governmental organizations have helped jump-start compilation of the accounts in specific countries, regionally and also on a more global scale, though the exploration of global databases. While these are not international organizations in the traditional sense, these organizations could also significantly contribute to the UNCEEA work programme.

Questions for the UNCEEA

- Does the Committee believe there is an optimal size for the UNCEEA?
- What are the Committee's views on the trade-off between regional representation of countries vs having countries with more experience in compilation?
- What are the Committee's views on representation from international organizations? Is the current proportion of IO members too high or low?
- What are the Committee's views on representation from non-National Statistical Offices (including NGOs)?
- What would be the appropriate mechanism for determining membership? Is it advisable to have more formal rules and rotating membership, as with the IAEG-SDG? Or is preferred to maintain a more flexible membership policy?

Annex

| Country/organization | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | Total | Region | Developing | Active bureau or WG member? |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|----------|------------|-----------------------------|
| Australia | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Oceania | | 1 |
| Bhutan | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Asia | 1 | |
| Brazil | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | Americas | 1 | |
| Canada | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Americas | | 1 |
| China | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Asia | 1 | |
| Colombia | | | 1 | | 1 | Americas | 1 | |
| Denmark | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 3 | Europe | | |
| Finland | | 1 | 1 | | 2 | Europe | | |
| France | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | Europe | | |
| Germany | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | Europe | | 1 |
| India | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Asia | 1 | |
| Indonesia | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Asia | 1 | |
| Italy | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Europe | | |
| Jamaica | | | 1 | | 1 | Americas | 1 | |
| Kenya | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | Africa | 1 | |
| Malaysia | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Asia | 1 | |
| Mexico | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 3 | Americas | 1 | 1 |
| Mongolia | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Asia | 1 | |
| Netherlands | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Europe | | 1 |
| Philippines | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Asia | 1 | 1 |
| Russian Federation | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Europe | | |
| Samoa | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 3 | Oceania | 1 | |
| South Africa | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Africa | 1 | 1 |
| Sweden | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 3 | Europe | | 1 |
| Uganda | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Africa | 1 | |
| United Kingdom | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Europe | | 1 |
| USA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | Americas | | 1 |
| CBD | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | | | |
| EEA | | | | | 0 | | | |
| Eurostat | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | | | 1 |
| IMF | | | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| FAO | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 3 | | | 1 |
| OECD | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | | | 1 |
| World Bank | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | | | 1 |
| UN Environment | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | | | 1 |
| UNDP | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 3 | | | |
| UN Water | 1 | | | | 1 | | | |
| UNCCD | 1 | 1 | | | 2 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| UNECE | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | | | 1 |
| ECLAC | | 1 | 1 | | 2 | | | 1 |
| ECA | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | 1 |
| ESCAP | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | 1 |
| ILO | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| UNWTO | | | 1 | | 1 | | | |