COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYSTEM OF ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMIC ACCOUNTING

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1. Introduction

The objective of this communication strategy is to increase implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and mainstream its use in integrated policy making. At the heart of the strategy is a 'sense and respond' approach that provides a clear sense of purpose and core communication messages and tools to enable the members of the UNCEEA to effectively promote the use of SEEA accounts in decision-making processes. At its core, sense and respond involves *sensing* in the form of gathering feedback through a two-way conversation and *responding* in the form of making appropriate adjustments to that feedback. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has used this approach very effectively and has championed it through its leadership of UNCEEA Area E.

 All UNCEEA members are expected to use this strategy to guide their own actions in their own contexts in their own ways. By using this strategy, the UNCEEA members become a distributed salesforce for the SEEA. The development of this strategy was made possible through the support of the European Union.

This strategy has been developed for use by UNCEEA members and their agencies, but it may be used or adapted by anyone interested in promoting the use of the SEEA, including other countries. It is suggested that countries adapt this strategy to formulate communication plans and materials at a national level to promote the SEEA to stakeholders.

2. The Communications Context

The SEEA has significant strengths that provide a strong foundation for effective communications:
- The imprimatur of the United Nations and its multilateral partner institutions provide access, credibility, and convening power.
- The amount of SEEA activity across the world (over 80 countries with programs) demonstrates momentum and has created an energized network that can be deployed in support of the implementation and communication of accounts.
- The SEEA's consistency with the SNA makes it uniquely relevant to important policy challenges.

In the months and years ahead, there are important opportunities for expanding awareness and demand for the SEEA:
- It is directly relevant to important ongoing policy processes related to biodiversity conservation, climate change and sustainable development.
- The SEEA is well-situated to play a role in supporting the anticipated post-2020 international biodiversity framework.
- It also provides a way to generate information to inform climate policy, both on the mitigation and adaptation fronts.
- More broadly, SEEA accounts can provide information that can help with achieving numerous sustainable development goals (SDGs) cost-effectively.
- The Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (NCAVES) project is an excellent vehicle for raising awareness about the practice of ecosystem accounting.

3. Communication Objectives and Principles
The purpose of the communication strategy is to guide members of the United Nations Committee of Experts (UNCEEA) and other proponents of the SEEA to contribute to the (global, regional and national)

implementation of the SEEA in as many countries as possible and to mainstream the use of the SEEA in integrated policy making. It builds upon and replaces the previous communication strategy developed in the fall of 2017.

In the current context, there are two overriding strategic communication goals:

- *Sharpen the SEEA identity.* Although the SEEA has had remarkable uptake throughout it remains unfamiliar to many outside the environmental-economic accounting community. There currently exists a lack of user-friendly materials that SEEA ambassadors can use to clearly explain key concepts and applications of the SEEA to outside audiences. The creation of a foundational message toolkit will avoid the need to constantly "reinvent the wheel" in outreach activities, saving time for all and enhance coherency in messaging.

- *Demonstrate the SEEA's relevance to ongoing policy processes*. The demand for the SEEA is dependent on the degree that policymakers and other stakeholders see it as relevant to solving pressing problems. Clearly spelling out the way the SEEA relates to specific policy changes is essential for increasing its uptake.

Communications should be developed and delivered according to the following guidelines/principles:
- **Appropriately adapted:** Communication materials and messages should be adapted to discrete audiences based on audience needs and interests. **Appropriately targeted:** Specific attention should be placed on identifying persons/groups that are skilled at promoting new ideas, as well as organisational or cultural gatekeepers in NSOs and policy and planning ministries
- **Clearly messaged:** The "value-add" of the SEEA for the target audience should be spelled out clearly in all communications. Attention should be paid to ensuring message consistency across products and presentations.
- **Proactive and responsive:** Opportunities to engage in dialogues (either in person or through avenues like social media) with target audiences should be pursued. Communications should contain calls to action and be oriented toward building a community of interested stakeholders,
- **Iterative:** Communications should emphasize continuous improvement through evaluation of the effectiveness of messages and delivery mechanisms. Audiences should be solicited for feedback on messages and materials and where possible metrics should be identified for evaluation purposes. **Networked:** Knowledge should be shared with the international community on implementation and research issues. Partners and funders should be acknowledged to demonstrate the power of the SEEA network, including using the logo in combination with other logos as appropriate.

4. Governance

Strategic oversight of the strategy is being provided by the UNCEEA which has Area E dedicated towards communication. The strategy will be implemented by the UNSD (which holds the Secretariat of UNCEEA, and is currently executing the NCAVES project which has a component on communications) in close collaboration with UNCEEA country members (including the 5 countries participating in the EU funded NCAVES project) and international agencies represented in the UNCEEA such as the World Bank, UN Environment, Eurostat and the UN regional commissions.

There are components of the strategy that are better developed centrally, either due to the ability to tap into an international network or the efficiency of creating one product for multiple countries. A communications toolkit, a suite of materials presenting basic concepts, definitions, and messages, will be developed centrally through UNCEEA. On the other hand, the unique setting and situation of each country will also require specific strategies tailored to the context.

A strength (and comparative advantage) of the UN system is its ability to work in multiple languages. The statistical standards are being translated into the six UN languages. Communication products should be translated when feasible and effective.

5. Communications Approach

While the SEEA has broad applicability across the public and private sectors, the majority of decisions that SEEA can support are made by governments, in policy and planning ministries. Thus, the priority for this phase of the strategy is to reach those persons who are skilled at promoting new ideas within, and to, government as well as organizational or cultural leaders in National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and policy and planning ministries.

Up-front investment by the UNCEEA in a core set of communications materials, including approved language on how to describe the SEEA and its various elements, will create efficiencies enabling expanded communication activity and increase message discipline. With such material in place, preparation for presentations and the creation of new communications outputs can become routinized.

These investments include:
- finalizing approved language for describing the SEEA and its activities;
- developing a SEEA brochure that can be used as a template for additional brochures;
- creating a stock of material that can be used by SEEA ambassadors for publications and presentations, including professionally created graphics and a presentation slide deck;
- and developing case studies.

Given the reach of the SEEA, it is important that these core materials are translated into multiple languages so that they can be effectively and efficiently used by as broad a range of the community as feasible. This includes translating key pages of the website.

Key to the strategies' success is taking advantage of the environmental economic accounting network. Allies such as the Natural Capital Coalition have well-developed communications infrastructures and access to important audiences outside the traditional SEEA constituencies of NSOs and line ministries. Additionally, a strength of the SEEA is the impressive array of supporters. Wherever possible, existing collaborations should be highlighted to demonstrate the scope and quality of the environmental-economic accounting network.

The crux of the communication strategy is to define a range of core messages that can be applied to all audiences, supplemented with more specific messages for targeted audiences. Each target audience (i.e. policy makers, researchers, business leaders, etc.), will have specific interests and priorities which can be addressed through tailoring of key messages to suit the circumstances.

The messages are presented in the table below and fall under four general categories:

1. Describing the basics of the SEEA
2. Differentiating and positioning the SEEA with respect to other approaches
3. Demonstrating the SEEA's relevance to specific issues on the agenda of the target audience
4. Dispelling misconceptions about environmental-economic accounting.

As communication opportunities arise, UNCEEA members will need to assess the present knowledge and commitment of each target group and adapt this strategy to achieve the desired level of commitment, varying from *first contact via awarenesss* to *understanding, engagement, involvement* and finally to *full commitment*. For each target group, the desired level of commitment should be identified, and the products specified below should be used. Members of the UNCEEA must know their audience and target the individuals/groups that are best at promoting new ideas to decision-makers or who are in a position to authorise action by others.

Target group	Characteristics	Key messages	Proposed products/actions	Opportunities for contact
Leaders of NSOs and environmental agencies	Responsible for SEEA implementation at national level, funding	SEEA provides a framework to measure the sustainability of economic growth by accounting for natural environment SEEA adds value to data that is already collected and is fully compatible with SNA SEEA is a conceptual framework that integrates environmental and economic data Monetary estimates do not commodify nature; they enable its economic value to be recognized in decision making. Accounts do not capture all the reasons to protect nature,	Case studies Presentation at high level meetings SEEA "Explainers"/brochures Twitter	Intergovernmental forums Conferences and seminars High level meetings Informal networks

		e.g., intrinsic value and ethical concerns		
Government (policy and planning ministries)	Responsible for policy, funding	SEEA provides a framework to measure the sustainability of economic growth by accounting for natural environment SEEA is a conceptual framework that integrates scientific and economic data SEEA methodology is detailed but resulting indicators are easy to interpret SEEA informs choices around taxation, regulation, planning, and environmental/economic policy	Presentation at high level meetings Twitter Case studies Talking points and briefing material	Intergovernmental forums Conferences and seminars High level meetings Social media
Scientific bodies (meteorological, geospatial, etc.)	Can help support an enduring pipeline of SEEA compliant data Can develop approaches that are compatible with SEEA	SEEA provides concrete opportunities to apply geospatial technology/data and link it to socioeconomic data SEEA adds value to data that is already collected and is fully compatible with SNA The SEEA does not replace environmental data, it provides a new platform for it Investing in streams of SEEA compliant data rather than multiple one-off studies is a more efficient use of resources.	"Why SEEA" publication Website Newsletter	Conferences and seminars Web presence
NSO and environmental agency staff	Implement and help further develop the SEEA	SEEA adds value to data that is already collected and is fully compatible with SNA SEEA methodology is detailed but resulting indicators are easy to interpret Monetary estimates do not commodify nature; they enable its economic value to be recognized in decision making.	"Why SEEA" publication SEEA "Explainers"/brochures Newsletter Website Twitter	Conferences and seminars Workshops and trainings Web presence

		Accounts do not capture all the reasons to protect nature, e.g., intrinsic value and ethical concerns		
International and regional agencies surrounding the SDGs	Responsible for creating indicators to measure progress of SDGs, promoting use of indicators and underlying data	SEEA provides a framework to measure the sustainability of economic growth by accounting for natural environment SEEA adds value to data that is already collected and does not compete with other indicators SEEA goes beyond GDP, allowing a wide range of indicators.	Presentation at high level meetings Website Newsletter Twitter	Conferences and seminars Programme meetings IAEG meetings Social media Web presence
Journalists	Instrumental in reaching a large audience	SEEA provides a framework to measure the sustainability of economic growth by accounting for natural environment SEEA goes beyond GDP, allowing a wide range of indicators. SEEA methodology is detailed but resulting indicators are easy to interpret Monetary estimates do not commodify nature; they enable its economic value to be recognized in decision making. Accounts do not capture all the reasons to protect nature, e.g., intrinsic value and ethical concerns	Website Press kit/"Why SEEA" publication SEEA "Explainers"/brochures Media releases, talking points and interviews with SEEA members about specific accounts Twitter	Conferences and seminars High level meetings with press presence Social media Web presence
Business leaders and chambers of commerce	Instrumental in achieving Green Growth and sustainability	SEEA provides a framework to measure the sustainability of economic growth by accounting for natural environment The SEEA provides a framework to measure corporate sustainability SEEA methodology is detailed but resulting	Press kit/"Why SEEA" publication Case studies of private enterprise accounts Website Twitter	Conferences and seminars Social media Web presence

		indicators are easy to interpret		
NGOs	Partners in implementation	SEEA provides a framework to measure the sustainability of economic growth by accounting for natural environment Accounts are objective and show both sides of the ledger The SEEA can be applied by NGOs to measure sustainability SEEA methodology is detailed but resulting indicators are easy to interpret Monetary estimates do not commodify nature; they enable its economic value to be recognized in decision making. Accounts do not capture all the reasons to protect nature, e.g., intrinsic value and ethical concerns	Website Newsletter Twitter	Web presence Workshops Conferences and seminars
Civil society	Instrumental in achieving Green Growth and sustainability	SEEA provides data to measure the sustainability of economic growth by accounting for natural environment Accounts are objective and show both sides of the ledger SEEA methodology is detailed but resulting indicators are easy to interpret	Website Newsletter Twitter	Web presence

Ecosystem Accounting

Ecosystem accounting is at the cutting edge of environmental-economic accounting. Although still in the experimental phase, an impressive amount of activity and progress has already taken place. The Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (NCAVES) project offers a significant opportunity to raise the profile of ecosystem accounting not just in the five project countries (Brazil, China, India, Mexico

and South Africa) but among the broader international community. The activities of the NCAVES countries can provide a good base for demonstrating the power and policy relevance of ecosystem accounting to key international processes, particularly the development of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The five countries participating in the EU funded NCAVES project are classified as "megadiverse" and are influential in negotiations on a post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The project therefore provides an excellent vehicle to mainstream environmental-economic accounting by building support among important players in the process. Thus, the project can promote the use of natural capital accounting in two ways by:

- influencing the agendas of major participants in the biodiversity negotiations (the project countries) and;
- demonstrating the potential of accounting to the global community through the communication of project activities and outcomes. National communication strategies for the five participating countries are hence being developed.

Communicating the project online and through brochures and other material should emphasize:

1. that project participation demonstrates the intellectual leadership of the partner countries;
2. the distinct contribution each country is making to advancing NCA (e.g. South Africa's creation of indicators, Brazil's green GDP, etc.); and
3. the concrete policy advances the accounts enable. As an initial step, a project brochure presenting messages 1 and 2 will be developed. In addition, an ecosystem accounting FAQ will be developed to help provide content for the partner countries' project web pages.

SEEA Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, SEEA-Energy, SEEA-Water and other subsystems

The SEEA Central Framework currently has three fully elaborated subsystems, including agriculture, forestry and fisheries; energy; and water, all of which have their own publications. These subsystems have also been identified in the Global Assessment of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics as priorities, particularly in developing countries. There is a need to develop specific efforts and products for these subsystems to help push forward implementation of these accounts.

Communicating these subsystems online and through brochures should emphasize:
1) the policy questions the accounts can help address;
2) how these subsystems complement the rest of the SEEA as well as different approaches;
3) provide concrete examples of how the accounts have been used in countries. As an initial step, FAQs will be developed for the website on these three areas.

6. Implementation

The following communication opportunities and activities will be undertaken:

- Website

  The SEEA website is the main platform from which the communication strategy is delivered. The website reaches the largest audience and thus must facilitate learning, communication and discussion for a variety of parties. The website should maintain a general and open character with subsites that may be more technical or closed in nature. Since the website is the main means of communication with civil society, technical jargon should be kept to a minimum, particularly on the main pages. The website is also the launching point for the SEEA newsletter, with sections devoted to updates from each programme and from international agencies and countries. Communication products planned for the website include case studies, briefings, media releases, frequently asked questions and plain language talking points or speeches.

  A knowledge base will be built for the website. As members produce communication products within their own local contexts, these can be shared via the knowledge base to create a repository of documents and presentations in multiple languages, as well as links to NSO pages/products on environmental-economic accounting. In addition, users should have the ability to search and filter the results in multiple ways (i.e. by language, topic, country, type of document, region, etc.).

  In addition, the website will host the global SEEA databases for the priority datasets of air emissions, energy, land, material flow and water accounts. With the development of these global databases, the website will become a means for communicating the detailed data of the accounts, as well as eye catching data visualizations and easy-to-understand aggregates. The use of infographics will feature heavily in the dissemination materials of the global SEEA databases on the website.

  The website should also keep target groups up to date through push notifications on the latest SEEA news and events. It currently hosts a sign-up for the newsletter and a calendar with all

kinds of SEEA events (i.e. technical, UNCEEA, London Group, country workshops, regional workshops, etc.). UNCEEA members are able to identify which events they can attend, to ensure that adequate representation of UNCEEA is maintained across the board. In addition, e-learning is available through the website, to make learning materials as accessible as possible.

- Data visualizations and infographics

  A strength of the SEEA is the volume of eye-catching visualizations such as maps and graphs that it can generate. Identifying compelling visuals that tell an interesting yet understandable story will generate fodder for web content and social media posts that are more likely to be viewed and shared. While compilation of global SEEA databases are under construction, data visualizations should feature heavily in dissemination of these future global databases. In addition, data visualizations should be a cornerstone of SEEA dissemination for National Statistical Offices.

- International meetings

  The SEEA's strongest selling point is its applicability to address important policy challenges. At least initially, it will be important to prioritize a discrete set of major policy processes to build communications efforts. Biodiversity and climate change are two logical candidates, with well-established global frameworks in place and significant ongoing activity. At a broader level, the SDGs provide numerous potential policy hooks. From an UNCEEA perspective, it makes sense to orient communications strategies around important global meetings. This will involve identifying priority meetings; developing communications goals and plans for those meetings; and creating specific communication materials connecting the SEEA to these processes. Highlighting links to policy is also the most direct route to getting publicity for the SEEA from media outlets.

- Workshops

  Workshops can be very effective mechanisms for engaging potential champions and change agents and promoting the benefits of SEEA to new audiences. Over time members are expected to contribute to shared knowledge about successful workshop formats that are suited to different audiences and objectives. Where possible, members should contribute to workshops and events that are delivered in their own countries and to developing countries in their regions.

- Conferences/seminars

  Using the 'sense and respond' approach that underpins this strategy, members are expected to take advantage of opportunities to present at conferences and events in their own countries or networks and use these events to communicate the key messages of this strategy. SEEA members are expected to dedicate expertise and time to propose, organise and participate in a range of events.

  Members should review the website for examples provided by other members and identify or create similar opportunities in their own contexts. Members can re-use or adapt materials shared by their UNCEEA colleagues. This may include proposing papers or presentations on the SEEA or specific accounts as a part of events that are not solely about environmental statistics, for example, scientific or ecological conferences, planning or regulatory forums, forestry, mining energy or agriculture forums or formal government meetings. Opportunities to provide SEEA presentations

within NSOs should also be actively pursued. Proposals should be put forward for side meetings or information sessions adjacent to related forums. All presentations should include the core messages outlined in this strategy and tailored messages for specific target audiences.

For further development of the SEEA, scientific conferences can be organized to present and discuss results of further research, engage specifically with certain fields (e.g. geospatial), and share feedback from experiences with the usage/implementation by the scientific community of researchers and statistical experts. Promotion of the SEEA in existing forums like conferences of EAERE and IARIW should also take place. In addition, conferences and seminars of potential partner projects can also provide opportunities to propose collaboration and use of the SEEA.

- Newsletters/brochures

Well-designed brochures in print and digital form should be widely distributed to target groups. These brochures should address the primary question, "Why SEEA?", and multiple versions of the brochure should be created. Each version should be designed with a target group in mind and reflect the group's characteristics and key messages. These brochures should be shared with countries so that they can be adapted and used to promote the SEEA on a national level.

In keeping with its goal of informing and motivating key stakeholders, the SEEA newsletter should supplement its reports on current projects and recent meetings with forward-looking articles identifying opportunities for to raise the profile of the SEEA among key policy audiences.

- Case studies

Case studies will be used to demonstrate the applicability and value of the SEEA. All members are expected to contribute concise case studies from their own experience. They may take the form of PowerPoint presentations, YouTube videos or written documents. These case studies can be shared on the SEEA knowledge base and incorporated into briefings and presentations by other members. Case studies will also be regularly included in the newsletter and can be used by countries to demonstrate the potential and value of the SEEA.

UNCEEA can also work to identify case studies of effective communications efforts to share with its community. For many National Statistical Offices, communicating the SEEA is uncharted territory. There are large potential benefits from sharing information about what works and what doesn't. A formal mechanism for identifying and sharing successful communications approaches and lessons learned should be implemented to reduce the learning curve for National Statistical Offices and to create a resource of best practices.

- Social Media

A social media strategy has been developed, primarily utilizing twitter, to promote upcoming meetings and conferences, current projects and keep abreast of SEEA related projects (i.e. natural capital accounting, etc.). Social media training should be provided for UNCEEA members and should cover how to use Twitter efficiently and effectively and when/how to re-tweet others. Once all SEEA members are confident in their skills to use Twitter (or similar platforms in different

countries) in appropriate ways, it is expected that members will actively tweet from relevant events with key messages about the SEEA.

Creating a social media presence is somewhat handicapped by institutional constraints. Key social media channels like Twitter are run through the UNSD account, and therefore a standalone SEEA identity is foreclosed. In addition, the best way to expand reach in social media is to engage in conversations with other accounts that have a wide reach. The brand identity of the UN and the approval process needed for tweeting makes engaging in the kind of online give-and-take that builds an audience difficult.

Therefore, it is important to take advantage of the #SEEA network, including other multilateral organizations like UN Environment, as well as NGOs with large social media audiences. This will involve encouraging SEEA allies to amplify important social media messages. In addition, there are tools that can be used to track hashtag and keyword effectiveness. These can be utilized to help monitor and refine strategy.

7. Monitoring Progress

All UNCEEA members should monitor their progress to full commitment to the SEEA by each of their specific target groups. Progress will be measured both by UNCEEA members' actions as well as the actions of target audiences. It is requested that members inform the Secretariat on a quarterly basis of any efforts that can be communicated to the rest of the UNCEEA, as well as to a broader audience.

Measures of progress include:

Activity indicators such as:
- Number of SEEA workshops/trainings held and attendance of workshops/trainings
- Number of SEEA-related conferences, seminars and forums attended to promote the SEEA and audiences reached
- Number of intergovernmental and high-level meetings attended to promote the SEEA and audiences reached

Output indicators such as:
- Number of SEEA messages tweeted and retweeted and number of Twitter likes.
- Amount of activity in the SEEA forum and amount of support provided by UNCEEA members
- Number of contributions to the newsletter and website content
- Amount of website traffic to the SEEA website
- Amount of website traffic to NSO pages on environmental-economic accounting
- Number of articles published in print and/or digital media about an event

Outcome indicators:
- Number of new countries taking up the SEEA and/or SEEA-EEA
- Number of peer-reviewed research/academic articles using the SEEA
- Number of indicators in international indicator frameworks that are informed / based on Natural Capital Accounts