



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

UN Economists Network: A User Perspective

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



DESA

Economic Analysis



What is the UN Economists Network?

- A new initiative introduced by UN Chief Economist Elliott Harris
- Inaugural meeting held in March 2019
- Brings together economists from across the UN system, to facilitate collaboration, communication and joint work among UN agencies
- Identified priority areas of research for the coming 2 years

Research priorities: Megatrends

- Identified 4 megatrends that form the backdrop to economic development and policy making over the coming decade:

- Climate change

- Inequality

- Demographics

- Technology



Geopolitical context

- Interactions between megatrends and nexus with conflict



Research priorities: Sub-issues

- “Moving beyond GDP” – counting what counts
- Debt management and restructuring approaches
- Migration—benefits and costs for origin and host countries
- Taxation—domestic resource mobilization; as an instrument of transformation; adapting to the digital economy
- Nature-based solutions—to climate change and environmental degradation
- Social protection— and the changing nature of work

Changing the dialogue around economic well-being

• What role for the Environmental-Economic Accounts?

- Rather than asking:
 - “How fast did GDP grow last year?”
- New questions:
 - “How much damage did economic activity do to the environment last year, compared to previous years?”
 - “How much did economic activity improve living standards at the lower, middle and upper ends of the income strata?”



Changing the dialogue

- Requires close cooperation between economists and statisticians
 - What sort of questions can this system of accounts help us answer?
 - How to convey messages to a broad audience in non-technical language?
- Many of these key issues are on the Agenda
 - Using SEEA for reporting on the SDGs
 - Communicating the policy uses of the SEEA
 - Development of global databases
 - SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting
 - Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism



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Thank you.

