UN Economists Network: A User Perspective

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

• Interactions between megatrends and nexus with conflict

Geopolitical context
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
Thank you.