

MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE UN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTING

3 June 2019, WebEx

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** Bert Kroese (Chair, Statistics Netherlands), Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands), Amanda Clark (Australia Bureau of Statistics), André Loranger, Carolyn Cahill, Jeff Fritzsche (Statistics Canada), Gerhard Bouwer (South Africa), Anton Steurer (Eurostat); Pierre-Alain Pionnier (OECD), Alessandra Alfieri, Jessica Ying Chan, Marko Javorsek (United Nations Statistics Division)
- **Regrets:** FAO, INEGI, Philippines Statistics Authority, World Bank, London Group

The Area Leads outlined key issues for discussion at the upcoming UNCEEA meeting:

1. AREA A: COORDINATION

Statistics Canada will present ideas for a workplan which focuses on identifying entry points for mainstreaming the SEEA. UNSD suggested that the work plan include also a review of the various groups working under the auspices of the UNCEEA, including their TORs to streamline the work.

Statistics Canada is also working with Viveka Palm (Statistics Sweden) and Sven Kaumanns (Destatis) of the IAEG-SDGs on the paper of the IAEG-SDGs Interlinkages Working Group focussing on the use of the SEEA for the SDGs. The group will prepare a paper and presentation for the UNCEEA. As part of this paper and presentation, it was suggested to have a concrete list of indicators that the UNCEEA and SEEA can prioritize and contribute to, particularly given the 2020 Comprehensive Review.

Actions:

- UNSD to organize a call with Viveka Palm, Sven Kaumanns and Statistics Canada to help progress the SDG paper and presentation for the upcoming UNCEEA meeting.

2. AREA B1: METHODOLOGY—SEEA CENTRAL FRAMEWORK

The main focus of the Area B1 session will be the need for a revision of the SEEA CF. Statistics Netherlands has been working on a paper with UNSD outlining the potential need for a revision of the SEEA CF. Statistics Netherlands has outlined a few different options for a revised SEEA CF (i.e. minor revision, major revision), including the option

of not revising the SEEA CF. The paper also broaches the potential for integrating a revised SEEA CF with the revised SEEA EEA. It was suggested to put some specific timings in the paper that reflect the timing of the SNA revision and other processes, as it is hoped to align the various processes (to the extent possible).

Actions:

- Eurostat and UNSD to enquire with SNA staff to provide some possible timings with regards to a SNA revision.

3. AREA B2: METHODOLOGY—SEEA EXPERIMENTAL ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTING

The key issue to be discussed at the UNCEEA is the issue of adoption of the revised SEEA EEA as a standard. Eurostat stressed the importance of having a discussion on how to ensure the UN Statistical Commission adopts the revised SEEA EEA, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of ensuring there will be sufficient support and backing at the Commission when the document is presented.

The Bureau reviewed and agreed with the plan for the current SEEA EEA Technical Committee, extended with the revision Area Leads, to act as the editorial board during the process of drafting of the revised SEEA EEA. The Technical Committee already provides broad representation, with the exception of the OECD not being a member yet. OECD was invited to join the SEEA EEA TC.

Actions:

- OECD to investigate possibility of joining editorial board. OECD accepted the offer after the meeting.
- The UNCEEA Chair to write a letter to the heads of the organizations of members of the SEEA EEA TC to ensure their representatives are released for the work of the editorial board, given its time demands.

4. AREA C: DATA

For the meeting, OECD has outlined some principles for the creation and maintenance of global SEEA databases on the SEEA website, focusing on data validation, treatment of estimates versus official statistics and country consent/approval. These principles have been organized to mimic the SDG data flows. It was suggested that the participation of Sven Kaumanns, given his role in preparing the first draft of the data flow document for the SDG indicators, during this discussion would be valuable. It was also noted that representation from the UNSD SDG team during this session would be useful.

The session will also provide an update on the priority accounts and a discussion on global water databases, for which there is no custodian agency. In particular, Statistics Canada will give a presentation on using Earth observation for water accounts and the implications for the development of global water accounts. It was also mentioned that the alignment of water questionnaires among different agencies is moving more slowly than expected, but that the UNCEEA could provide a statement putting pressure on alignment.

Actions:

- UNSD to ensure representation from the UNSD SDG team during the Area C session.

5. AREA D: CAPACITY BUILDING

The Area D session will look at the current status of SEEA implementation, what can be done to move things forward and a proposed roadmap for the 2020 Global Assessment. The Chair of the UNCEEA stressed the importance of discussing the targets at the upcoming meeting. The UNCEEA has not yet achieved the 2020 implementation targets and the Chair stressed that there should be broad discussion on what more we can do to reach the targets. The discussion will also cover the design and coverage of a new questionnaire to be launched in 2020.

6. AREA E: COMMUNICATION

Australian Bureau of Statistics gave an update on the call for case studies on the SEEA and its policy applications. The discussion at the upcoming meeting will focus on how the UNCEEA can make the best use of the case studies and how the UNCEEA can leverage the work being done by other organizations to ensure no efforts are duplicated. In particular, the Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP) and the World Bank WAVES programme will present on some similar efforts during the UNCEEA.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Friends of the Chair on the Future of Economic Statistics: Andre Loranger gave a brief update on the Friends of the Chair (FOC) meeting he participated in at UNHQ the week of 27 May. At the last UN Statistical Commission, the Commission explored the idea of the need for an additional group for the governance of economic statistics, and the FOC is investigating this possibility.

As the SEEA is linked to the SNA, the potential relationship between the UNCEEA and FOC needs to be better understood. The FOC will reach out to stakeholders, including the UNCEEA, to answer a set of questions by November to better understand their priorities and issues with governance. Based on this feedback, the FOC will draft a report for the 2020 commission. It was suggested that members of the UNCEEA be briefed with this information during the Area A session at the UNCEEA.

- UNCEEA membership: UNCEEA membership will be discussed at the end of the UNCEEA meeting. As the SEEA has developed, it is prudent to re-assess the composition and working methods of the UNCEEA. The UNCEEA is quite large, yet UNSD pointed out that there have been requests from more countries to join. In addition, the UNCEEA is only composed of international organizations and national statistical offices. However, this leaves out representation from line ministries and NGOs, which have become more and more involved in the development and implementation of the SEEA, particularly with the development of ecosystem accounting.