

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

4 March 2018, in person on the side-line of the UNSC

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** Bert Kroese (Chair, Statistics Netherlands), Amanda Clark (Australia Bureau of Statistics), André Loranger (Statistics Canada), Enrique Ordaz (INEGI), Risenga Maluleke (South Africa), Eduardo Barredo-Capelot (Eurostat), Paul Schreyer (OECD), Barbro Hexeberg (World Bank), Greg Gong (UNECA), Alessandra Alfieri, Elsa Begne De Larrea, Jessica Ying Chan, Julian Chow, Bram Edens, Marko Javorsek, Ivo Havinga (United Nations Statistics Division)
- **Regrets:** FAO, Philippines Statistics Authority.

1. AREA A: COORDINATION

Statistics Canada gave a brief overview of the work over the past year. In particular, Area A members have developed and implemented a “super calendar” of events to share events where a UNCEEA presence would be beneficial to mainstream the SEEA (for example, the CBD COP). This “super calendar” is hosted on the UNSD SEEA website. In addition, Area A has collected various SEEA training materials (PowerPoints, e-Learning and accompanying videos, training exercises) from UNCEEA members to make available on the SEEA website. In order to ensure that the training materials are aligned with the SEEA methodology, Statistics Canada is piloting an assessment of the training materials. Area A intends to complete the work this year.

2. AREA B1: METHODOLOGY—SEEA CENTRAL FRAMEWORK

Statistics Netherlands noted three new methodological papers that have been reviewed and endorsed by the SEEA CF Technical Committee, which focus on economy-wide material flow accounts, data structure definitions (DSDs) and integrated environmental activity accounts, respectively. In addition, work is ongoing for fossil fuel subsidies and the link to tourism satellite accounts. For the UNCEEA this year, Statistics Netherlands and UNSD will draft a paper exploring the need for a revision of the SEEA Central Framework.

3. AREA B2: METHODOLOGY—SEEA EXPERIMENTAL ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTING

Eurostat introduced the work done thus far on the SEEA EEA revision and noted the good progress being made. There has been a lot of outreach and engagement with

stakeholders, and the group stressed the need for strong engagement with the SNA community, particularly in terms of valuation.

UNSD also clarified the rationale behind the revision—there has been a lot of demand from countries and policy makers on natural capital accounting, and there has also been a lot of experimentation going on in countries. The revision is taking place to draw upon this experience, harmonize approaches and develop statistical framework for natural capital accounting that is reliable and consistent. UNSD also noted the more detailed background document to the Commission, which goes more in depth on the purpose of, and plan for, the SEEA EEA revision.

4. AREA C: DATA

The Bureau reviewed the progress made towards global databases, particularly for air emission accounts (OECD), material flow accounts (UN Environment) and energy accounts (UNSD). The Bureau also discussed the issue of country approval before publishing. OECD stressed the importance of informing countries on methodology and the data dissemination process well before publishing their estimated air emission accounts. UNSD highlighted the example of UN Environment, where data was sent to countries before publishing, giving them an opportunity to decline to have their data published.

It was agreed that widely disseminating the methodology and maintaining transparency on the process for publishing and dissemination was key. Several members of the Bureau highlighted the fact that this issue is much wider than the SEEA global databases and suggested to follow what is established by the IAEG-SDGs for the SDG indicators.

5. AREA D: CAPACITY BUILDING

On behalf of Statistics South Africa, UNSD provided a brief overview of the activities of the working group. The working group, consisting of international organizations and regional commissions, meets quarterly to inform each other of ongoing initiatives and promote coordination and collaboration. This year the working group will also begin to prepare for the 2020 administration of the Global Assessment on Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics.

The group will also undertake the collection of SEEA focal points. The group hopes to identify a SEEA focal point within each national statistical office, in order to streamline

communications and responses to requests (i.e. responses to the Global Assessment, requests for data validation, etc).

6. AREA E: COMMUNICATION

On behalf of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, UNSD introduced the main areas of work in this workstream, namely the SEEA News & Notes newsletter and the website. The newsletter is being released on a quarterly schedule, and the website will soon be re-organized to make it easier to navigate.

In addition, over the course of 2019 UNSD, with funding from BMZ/GIZ, will draft a series of issues papers on how the SEEA can be applied for policy. These issues papers will focus on biodiversity, climate change and finance/planning. They will start from the policy questions, then move on to how the SEEA can help address those policy questions. The intention is that these issues papers will form another core SEEA publication. An e-learning course, which takes the issues papers as a basis, will also be developed. UNSD requested the Bureau to send along any recommendations for consultants.

7. NATURAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTING AND VALUATION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (NCA&VES) PROJECT

UNSD provided an update on the E.U.-funded NCA&VES project. The project, which is being conducted in Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, has been making good progress. The progress of the countries has been well-aligned with the revision of the SEEA EEA, with the countries' experiences informing practical matters of compilation and implementation of the accounts. It was noted that biophysical modeling and scenario modeling documents will be produced as part of the project, and that these guidelines would be reviewed by the SEEA EEA Technical Committee.