

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

15 September, teleconference

Meeting minutes

- **Present:** Bert Kroese (UNCEEA Chair and Deputy Director General Statistics Netherlands); Amanda Clark (Australian Bureau of Statistics); Jeff Fritzsche, Greg Peterson, (Statistics Canada); P. Bhanumati, Ramana Murthy (MOSPI, India); Sjoerd Schenau (Statistics Netherlands); Vivian Ilarina (Philippines Statistical Authority); Jo Evans (ONS, UK); Anton Steurer (Eurostat); Jim Tebrake (IMF); Viveka Palm (Acting Chair, London Group on Environmental Accounting); Daniel Clarke, Myriam Linster, Peter Van de Ven (OECD); Sofia Ahlroth (World Bank); Alessandra Alfieri, Elsa Begne, Jessica Ying Chan, Marko Javorsek, Kebebush Welkema (United Nations Statistics Division)
- **Regrets:** FAO, INEGI Mexico, Statistics South Africa

## 1. TOUR DE TABLE

- Area A: The Working Group met after the UNCEEA to establish priorities, namely communications and stakeholder engagement, with a focus on biodiversity, climate change, sustainable finance and circular economy. Recently, the group has explored working with UNECE to develop a global programme of work on circular economy and engaging with experts to draft a paper on the SEEA and sustainable finance.
- Area B1: The ISWGNA Subgroup on Wellbeing and Sustainability has been drafting guidance notes for the SNA revision on selected issues. Although many members of the group are members of the UNCEEA, further discussion is needed in particular in terms of the process for engaging the UNCEEA in the SNA revision process more formally. It was suggested to put this on the agenda of the next UNCEEA meeting.
- Area B2: Two sessions of the Forum of Experts on SEEA Ecosystem Accounting have taken place this summer, and all substantive chapters have been sent for global consultation. In mid-October, a global consultation of the full book is planned, with the consultation ending in November. Eurostat also noted the interest in ecosystem accounting in the EU, and the EU is putting forth the legal base for ecosystem accounts.
- Area C: The Committee took note of the progress made in developing the methodology for estimated air emission accounts, which will be presented at the upcoming London Group. In addition, UNSD noted that limited funding has been allocated from UNSD regular budget to develop dissemination of air emissions and energy accounts on the SEEA website. The Working Group has also discussed the need to make progress for SEEA-compliant land cover accounts and the development of data template to start collecting data directly from countries
- Area D: The definition for SEEA implementation has recently been finalized and will be sent to the UNCEEA. The Global Assessment has been edited to reflect this new definition of implementation, and UNSD plans to send out the Global Assessment later this week. Also, nomination for SEEA focal points have been received by a number of countries.

## 2. SEEA EEA – STRATEGY FOR THE 51<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION

- Bureau members noted the importance of developing a strategy towards the adoption of the SEEA EEA at the next UNSC; given that the UNSC will likely be virtual or a hybrid mix of virtual and in-person, it will be difficult to know the concerns of countries during the meeting. Thus, the Bureau should work to reach out to countries beforehand to understand their concerns. The outreach should be done at the management level of NSOs.
- While Bureau members agreed on dropping the “experimental”, it was suggested to consider alternatives to the label of “standard.” The option of “initial standard”, which was taken by the SEEA Central Framework, could also be used for the revised SEEA EEA. Similarly, a research agenda would accompany this “initial standard” and the text could make clear that the standard would need to be maintained and updated on a regular basis, but it provides a good basis for implementation.
- Some members expressed concerns on valuation, particularly its perception by policy makers as the numbers obtained are relatively small. At the same time, the valuation concepts in the SEEA EEA are conceptually sound, and it was suggested that text on the caveats of undertaking and interpreting valuation could be inserted into the appropriate chapters as necessary. Overall, it was agreed that the UNCEEA should be bold, rather than timid, in how it positions the revised SEEA EEA.
- The Bureau also noted the importance of linking to policy demands when speaking to countries on the revised SEEA EEA (e.g. Green Deal), and the need to make it a standard.

## 3. UNECE CLIMATE CHANGE MEETING

- The SEEA will be presented during the upcoming Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-related Statistics in two sessions with a presentation from Statistics Sweden and one from UNSD. The UNCEEA considered a priority to develop a programme of work on climate change, given its relevance in the policy debate and the contributions that the SEEA can offer in providing an integrated measurement framework to support decision making.
- It was noted that working with UNECE in a similar format as the circular economy could be explored. Also, it was noted that the environment statistics and environmental accounting programmes need to be brought together.
- **Action:** The Chair and UNSD will work together to develop a way forward.

#### 4. BIODIVERSITY AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK FOR THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

- UNSD has sent a letter to all NSO to contribute to the development of monitoring framework for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The CBD is taking the contribution of NSOs seriously, and NSOs are expected to have a prominent role in the post-2020 monitoring framework, particularly in terms of development and implementation of the monitoring framework.
- The draft framework will be out at the end of September and a workshop to present the framework is tentatively scheduled for 9 October 2020. In line with this, it was suggested to discuss the way forward during the next UNCEEA meeting, as well as the creation of a group on Biodiversity composed of NSOs and CBD focal points to establish a process similar to the SDGs.

#### 5. PLANNING OF THE NEXT UNCEEA MEETING

- The next meeting of the UNCEEA will take place in mid-November, tentatively the week of 16<sup>th</sup> November, after the complete draft of the revised SEEA EEA has been circulated for global consultation. It is planned to hold the meeting over two days (three hours each day).
- Tentative items for the agenda include:
  - Status of revised SEEA EEA
  - Global biodiversity monitoring framework and involvement of NSOs
  - Project proposal on Ocean accounting jointly prepared by GOAP, UNESCAP, World Bank and UNSD
  - The revision of the SNA and impact on the SEEA
  - Sustainable finance
- **Action:** UNSD will send a save the date soon.