

Working Methods and Membership of the UNCEEA

Introduction

During the [14th Meeting](#) of the UNCEEA, the Committee engaged in an evaluation of membership and working methods to ensure that it can effectively carry out its mandate. As the UNCEEA has a broad umbrella function in providing overall vision, coordination, prioritisation and direction in the field of environmental-economic accounting and related statistics, it is imperative that members of the Committee are engaged in the Committee's work and actively contribute to the programme of work. As a follow-up to the 14th Meeting of the UNCEEA, the Committee "requested the Bureau of the UNCEEA to come up with a proposal on membership and working methods of the UNCEEA, taking into account the increased number of countries implementing the SEEA and the growing relevance of the SEEA EEA" for the 15th Meeting of the UNCEEA. In addition, as the current the current work programme of the UNCEEA [finishes in 2020](#), the 15th Meeting of the UNCEEA provides an opportunity for the Committee to assess its working methods in the context of a new work programme. Thus, this document will outline a proposal for both membership and working methods.

Membership

Given that at the 14th Meeting of the UNCEEA, the Committee "recognized the need to accommodate new members, ensure regional representation and have a suitable balance between countries and international organizations," it is suggested that the Committee keep membership open and accommodate new members. It is suggested to maintain this inclusive approach to all existing members as well. Given the broad mandate of the UNCEEA and the cross-cutting nature of environmental-economic accounting, taking an inclusive approach is important to advancing the field in a coordinated fashion.

An open and inclusive approach could also help achieve a more equitable regional representation of the Committee, particularly as SEEA implementation increases around the world and in developing countries. However, it is important to note that UNSD's funding limit the number of new countries that are able to attend yearly meetings. Thus, broadening the sources of funding (e.g. potentially from other international organizations) could help diversify and open up membership.

While an inclusive approach is suggested, it is also recommended that the Bureau periodically evaluate members in terms of their commitment and contributions to the Committee's work. Both new and old members alike should be able and willing to contribute to UNCEEA activities outside of simply attending yearly meetings. In particular, they should be ready to function as SEEA "ambassadors" within their countries/regions. They should also be willing to engage in the working groups of the UNCEEA and support the Area Leads in carrying out their programme of work. If countries are not attending or active in the Committee, then it is suggested that the Bureau initiate a dialogue with those countries to understand their willingness to participate in the Committee.

During the last UNCEEA meeting, the Committee also “acknowledged the importance of NSOs in terms of forming the core UNCEEA membership, as well as the need to bring in expertise from non-NSOs for UNCEEA meetings as necessary.” Given this, it is suggested that each UNCEEA meeting provide a small number of participants to participate as “observers,” including relevant participants from NGOs or academia. Observers could contribute to the discussion by informing the UNCEEA on specific topics. This would expand the perspectives shared during UNCEEA meetings while keeping the core UNCEEA membership to NSOs.

Working methods

Currently the UNCEEA Bureau meets approximately 4-5 times a year, with the Committee meeting every year. Thus far, the Bureau has assisted the Chair to carry out specific activities between meetings. In addition, all area leads are members of the Bureau, and the Bureau has taken a role in supporting the area leads in advancing their respective work programmes. Decision-making is carried out mainly by the wider Committee during its yearly meeting.

While these working methods have allowed an inclusive approach to decision making, it has also left the Committee slower to react to events and initiatives that demand more immediate responses and actions. For instance, the pace of activities related to the post-2020 global biodiversity agenda has been extremely quick, with tight deadlines. Several SEEA-related initiatives (e.g. [nature-based solutions](#), SDGs, [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#)) solicit requests for comments and input at short notice. In these instances, the Bureau has submitted documents to the broader Committee for review before submitting. However, the process is time consuming and more agile working methods warrant consideration.

Moreover, if the Committee takes an inclusive policy towards membership, its overall working methods will need to change accordingly. Taking decisions once a year with a large group of people will hinder agile responses, result in greater bottlenecks and potentially lead to conclusions or recommendations which are not always acted upon. Thus, it is suggested that the Bureau of the UNCEEA take a larger role in decision making at its quarterly meetings. In order to make sure that these decisions are representative of the wider Committee and environmental-economic accounting community and that progress is made during its quarterly meetings, it is suggested to consider the following criteria when assessing the Bureau and its members with regards to the work programme for 2021-2025:

- Willingness to take a more active role in participation. Given competing demands, not all Bureau members attend the quarterly meetings or actively participate. However, if the Bureau is to take an enlarged role, its members would need to be willing to devote more time and take a more active role in participating in meetings and follow-up actions. Ensuring a more active Bureau could be achieved through an affirmation of commitment from existing Bureau members. In addition, this criteria should be made clear to any potential new Bureau members.
- A regionally representative and gender-inclusive Bureau. If the Bureau is to have a greater decision-making power, it is important that the Bureau be representative of the UNCEEA and broader environmental-economic accounting community. Ensuring that

the Bureau is more representative will likely involve adding in additional Bureau members from under-represented groups.

- Leadership and action by area leads. Area leads have a large responsibility in carrying out the overall work programme of the UNCEEA. While the Bureau has a role in supporting area leads in advancing the programme of work, it is equally important that the area leads actively engage with the Bureau and lead in pushing forward their programme of work.

Finally, it is suggested that the Committee consider holding two meetings a year, with a shorter, mid-year meeting being held virtually and the other meeting held in-person (once this is possible again). This could further promote quicker decision-making.

Questions for the Committee

- 1) Does the Committee agree with the proposal for an inclusive UNCEEA comprised of NSOs, but also adding “observers” of NGOs and/or academia to its annual meetings, as appropriate?
- 2) Does the Committee agree with the proposal for a more representative and active Bureau which takes decisions in the intervening periods between the Committee meetings? If so, are there suggestions of countries and Bureau members which could increase regional and gender representation?
- 3) What are the Committee’s thoughts on holding an additional mid-year meeting?