

Part II: Questionnaire for Representatives of International Organizations

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1. Please describe current activities of your organization in the area of environmental and economic accounts.

ESCWA assists Member States to increase their capacity to implement the unified and comprehensive system of national accounts SNA 93 and to use the purchasing power parities (PPP) conversions in the construction of national accounts and index numbers through training workshops, studies and training manuals:

- ESCWA published national accounts studies of the ESCWA region bulletin no. 22 in 2003
- ESCWA in cooperation with UNSD translated 1993 SNA into Arabic
- ESCWA organized a workshop on the 1993 SNA in Amman, Jordan, 1994
- Currently four ESCWA countries implemented SNA 93

2. Please, describe future activities in the area of environmental and economic accounts.

Depending on requests from ESCWA Member States, it may be possible to include in the biennium work programme for 2006-2007 capacity building activities related to fostering environmental-economic accounting.

3. In your opinion, what should be the role of the Task Force on environmental-economic accounting?

The Task Force should provide a coordinating role among countries and regions in efforts to promote concepts and methodologies associated with environmental-economic accounting. As such, the Task Force should primarily play the role of a facilitator and forum that ensures communication and information sharing among countries and regions. Secondly, the Task Force could serve as a facilitator of capacity building services, albeit based on the substantive input of the London Group.

Within its role as coordinator, the Task Force should also promote efforts that pursue harmonization of environmental-economic accounting methods across countries and regions so that national accounting systems that incorporate environmental-economic accounting procedures are compatible and comparable.

4. In your opinion, which activities of the Task Force would best facilitate the implementation of environmental-economic accounting in the countries?

Information dissemination and awareness raising among policy-makers (national accounts officials and representatives of relevant line ministries) on environmental-economic accounting concepts and benefits that seek to promote the approach (see below) are the first steps towards implementation. Implementation should then be advanced based on action plans formulated at the regional level or among a like-minded clusters of countries, as well as action plans formulated at the national level.

The Task Force could support this implementation process by supporting the preparation of training materials (modules that include narrative text, PowerPoint presentations and interactive exercises) that focus on key components (and differences) presented by tradition and proposed systems of national accounts. Effort should be made to make these training materials practical in nature and include lessons learned by countries. Effort should also be made to avoid duplicating previous capacity building materials, including training handbooks that are already available in several languages. Training materials should be made prepared and made easily available in at least three major languages. These materials could be used during the workshops proposed below.

As noted above, it is suggested that the Task Force should provide a coordinating/facilitating role in support of this initiative. It should not serve as an expert or advisory body. As such, it is unlikely that the Task Force would have the specialized in-house expertise that would be necessary to satisfy the technical assistance needs of countries as they move towards implementing action plan.

5. In your opinion, which activities of the Task Force would best facilitate the promotion of the uses of environmental-economic accounting at the policy level?

Each region or cluster of similarly economically/environmentally-structured countries should prepare a briefing paper (20-25 pages) on the benefits of adopting environmental-economic accounting methods. The paper should review the status and identify the current gaps that have been revealed in existing national accounts systems. The paper would then identify the ways in which environmental-economic accounting approaches could “fill in the gaps.” In doing so, the paper could raise the understanding of countries on ways in which these new accounting approaches can help them to better assess their national resources and thus better plan their sustainable development strategies. The briefing paper should be prepared in consultation with Member States and be available in English as well as the local language(s) of the region/cluster.

Workshops could then be organized at the regional or cluster level to discuss the benefits (and challenges) of adopting new methods. Each workshop would seek to achieve consensus in support of environmental-economic accounting, and to formulate an action plan (at the regional/cluster levels) on how to proceed with moving towards implementation. National action plans should then follow to move the implementation process forward.

Additional comments:

For ESCWA Member States, environmental-economic accounting components related to water, energy and policy-related issues would be of priority.

Kindly also note that these suggestions are based on informal internal consultations among interested staff at ESCWA in preparation of the Task Force meeting. Based on the outcomes of the meeting, ESCWA would be in a better position to elaborate its views on the Task Force and its contribution to the proposed initiative.