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**PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE UNCEEA
A PROPOSAL**

Paper prepared by UNSD

(for discussion)

Programme of work for the UNCEEA

A two-year (2009-2011) and medium term perspective (2009-2014)

Introduction

1. At its 40th Session in February 2009, the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) requested the UNCEEA “to develop a programme of work outlining its priorities and to disseminate it widely”.¹

2. It is useful to recall that “the mandate of the Committee is to (a) provide strategic vision, direction and coordination to mainstream environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics in national, regional and international statistical systems; (b) develop normative international statistical standards and supporting methodological documents on environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics; (c) promote the development of integrated databases at international, regional and national level on environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics; (d) promote the implementation of international statistical standards of environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics in countries; and (e) promote the use of official statistics in scientific and policymaking communities.

3. To fulfill its mandate, the programme of work of the Committee encompasses six areas, namely (a) coordination; (b) methodological development for normative standards and other research; (c) development of integrated databases; (d) implementation of environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics and statistical capacity building; (e) promotion of environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics; and (f) formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues. An elaboration of the Committee programme of work in the six areas is set out in annex I to the present report.”²

4. This paper attempts to provide an overview of the programme of work of the UNCEEA within a two year (2009-2011) and a medium five year term (2009-2014) perspective. The draft programme of work will be revised to reflect the discussions during the meeting.

Programme of work for the UNCEEA

5. The activities of the UNCEEA are organized on the basis of the 6 areas of the programme of work agreed by the UNCEEA.

(a) Coordination

6. The Committee fosters coordination, integration and complementarity of programmes in environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics, including statistics on climate change among international and regional agencies and countries. Leadership, a single focal point, and a coordinated vision among international and regional agencies active in the

¹ Statistical Commission Report on the fortieth session (24-27 February 2009) Economic and Social Council Official Records 2009 Supplement No. 4 (E/2009/24 E/CN.3/2009/29), Decision 40/104 item (f).

² See Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental Accounting E/CN.2009/7
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc09/2009-7-EnvEcoAccounting-E.pdf>

field of environment are considered necessary to raise the profile of environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics.

7. The Committee will continue to coordinate and provide vision, direction and prioritisation to ensure that existing and newly established groups work in complementary fashion. These groups include the London Group on Environmental Accounting, the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics, the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Energy Statistics, the OECD-Eurostat Task Force on Emission Permits, the Task Force for Measuring Sustainable Development, the Joint Task Force of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy and the CES on Environmental Indicators and other expert groups that might be established within the scope of its mandate.

(b) Methodological development for normative standards and other research

8. The role of the Committee is to oversee the methodological development of environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics, including statistics on climate change.

9. In particular this involves managing and overseeing the revision of the SEEA and involves managing and setting the direction for the preparation of the suite of publications in support of the new SEEA standard.

10. In the two years perspective (2009-2011), the programme of work of the UNCEEA will focus on the following publications

- Revision of the SEEA and its elevation to an international statistical standard. This project remains the highest priority of the UNCEEA until its expected completion by the adoption of Volume 1 and the related parts of Volume 3 in 2012 and Volume 2 in 2013. The project management framework for the revision of the SEEA had been submitted as a background document to the UN Statistical Commission.³

Water

- The SEEA-Water is in the process of being edited and printed after its adoption by the UN Statistical Commission as an international Statistical Standard in 2007.
- International Recommendation for Water Statistics (IRWS) – expected to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in 2010. A progress report on the drafting of IRWS is presented in paper UNCEEA/4/16.
- Compilation Material on Water Statistics –to be developed after the completion of IRWS. The material will be posted on the knowledge based platform on water currently being developed

Energy

- SEEA for Energy – expected to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in 2011. A progress report on the drafting of SEEA-Energy is presented in paper UNCEEA/4/23.
- International Recommendations for Energy Statistics (IRES) – expected to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in 2011.
- Energy Statistics Compilers Manual – being developed in parallel with IRES.

³ See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc09/BG-SEEA.pdf>

Physical flows

- SEEA for Material Flow – expected to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in 2011.

Climate Change

- SEEA for Air Emission – expected to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in 2012. As an extension to the SEEA-Energy it is proposed to prepare a separate volume on SEEA for Air Emissions covering all air emissions, not only those related to energy.
- Developing a programme of work for climate change.

11. In the medium-term perspective (2009-2014), the programme of work may focus on the following activities:

- SEEA-Land and Ecosystems
- SEEA-Forest
- International Recommendations on Waste Statistics
- Quality assessment frameworks providing best practices on data collection and compilation for various resources/modules

(c) Development of integrated databases:

12. Until recently environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting have developed in separate tracks. The statistical community recognized the need to harmonize methodologies and data collection of environment statistics and link them to the concepts, definitions and classifications of environmental-economic accounting. The role of the Committee is to ensure that international data collection activities are carried out in line with the standard(s) and the accompanying international recommendations and ensure that information is produced and used in the most efficient and cost-effective way. The set of standard tables should be used as the reference set of information that countries should compile taking into consideration the priorities and environmental concerns of countries. The Committee should promote the establishment of national, regional and international databases in support of evidence-based decision-making, in particular in the context of sustainable development, climate change and Millennium Development Goals.

13. In the two years perspective (2009-2011), the focus of the work will be on an integrated database on water. The strategy on the implementation of the SEEAW and more broadly on how to strengthen the information base in countries and the international data collection is presented in paper UNCEEA/4/16.

14. Agricultural statistics????

15. In the medium-term perspective (2009-2014), the work would focus on integrated databases for material flow and in particular waste.

(d) Implementation of environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics and statistical capacity building:

16. The increased demand by the national, regional and international agenda for environment information has produced a challenge and an opportunity for the statistical community to mainstream environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics.

17. In the two year perspective (2009-2011) the work of the UNCEEA on the implementation of environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics will focus in the field of water accounts and statistics as its highest priority. A proposal on the implementation strategy is tabled in paper UNCEEA/4/16.

18. In the medium-term perspective (2009-2014), the implementation of the SEEA and in particular the energy and MFA modules will become a high priority.

(e) Promotion

19. Environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics are relatively new areas of statistics which often do not enjoy the same priority as other statistics (i.e. economic statistics or social statistics) within the national and global statistical systems. There is a need to mainstream these statistics within the statistical systems in particular in response to the new challenges posed by the users' community in particular with regard to measuring sustainable development, climate change and integrated resource management.

20. At the same time, the statistical community has a role to play vis-à-vis the users' community represented by policy makers, academia and scientists. It has to raise awareness of the uses of the statistics it produces. SEEA has proven its potential and added value for environmental-economic analysis. Building on existing experiences, the statistical community should take an active role in the promotion of SEEA for environmental-economic analysis and for formulating international priorities based on users' needs.

21. In the two years perspective (2009-2011), the Committee will focus its efforts on the following:

Water

- Continue demonstrate the usefulness of water accounts to the users' community, in particular in the water community at national, regional and international level. The paper UNCEEA/4/16 suggests various actions including raising awareness of the SEEA to the UN Secretary General Advisory Board of Water.
- Preparation of a publication (20-30 pages) covering the main concepts of the SEEAW illustrated with country examples and link it to key policy issues such as climate change, water pricing, water efficiency and the MDGs.
- Work closely with the World Water Assessment Programme and UN-Water to ensure that the SEEAW is adopted by the water community.

Material Flow

- Work with UNEP, DEFRA and other international, regional and national agencies to ensure that the usefulness of the SEEA for Resource Efficiency and Resource Productivity is understood.

Energy

- Organize a user-producer conference on energy upon completion of the SEEA-Energy.

Climate Change

- Start by actively engaging on behalf of the statistical community with the International Panel on Climate Change to promote the use and usefulness of official statistics in climate change statistics and policies;
- Preparation of a concept note and possibly a publication on the contribution of the SEEA to the climate change.
- Participate in climate change meetings to ensure that the views of the statistical community are reflected.

Ecosystem

- The possible launch of the new Millennium Ecosystem Assessment by UNEP and the possible establishment of Inter-governmental Panel on Biodiversity and Climate Change Ecosystem Accounts as well as the Conference Beyond 2010 by the Convention of Biological Diversity will provide important opportunities to raise awareness of the SEEA and in particular on the classification of ecosystems and their valuation.

(e) Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues

22. The national and international community has placed several emerging issues related to the environment high on their political agenda. They include cross-cutting issues such as climate change and sustainable development. Until present, the statistical community has responded to these needs in an uncoordinated and ad-hoc manner. There is a need for the statistical community to engage more prominently in the international debate and articulate a statistical response, based on the international statistical standards, to better meet the users' needs.

23. In particular, the UNCEEA should represent the statistical community position in the on-going discussions on the following policy frameworks: the Green Economy Initiative, The Economics of the Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), Resource Efficiency and Resource Productivity, Climate Change, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, etc..