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**Second Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on  
Environmental-Economic Accounting  
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**Towards a Strategy for the Implementation of the System of  
Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water (SEEAW)**

**Paper prepared by UNSD**

*(for discussion)*

## **A. Background**

1. The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its 38<sup>th</sup> Session held from 26 March to 2 February 2007 adopted the *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water* (SEEAW) as interim international statistical standard and encouraged its implementation in countries. It further requested the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) to develop an implementation strategy for the SEEAW and submit it to the next session of the UNSC in February 2008.

2. In response to this request, UNSD has prepared a draft implementation strategy for the SEEAW for discussion at the meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEAA) in July 2007. A proposal for a strategy was discussed at the London Group on Environmental Accounting (Johannesburg, 26-30 March) and later at the Expert Group Meeting on Production of Statistics on Natural Resources and the Environment (Cairo, 5-7 June 2007). This paper will also be discussed at the Regional Workshop on Water Accounting (Santo Domingo, 16 -18 July 2007).

3. The proposed strategy aims at integrating the SEEAW into the national policy framework of integrated water resource management (IWRM). It puts great emphasis on linking the implementation of water accounts to users' demand as well as more broadly into national economic policies. Following up on the outcome of the User-producer Conference on Water Accounting for Integrated Water Resource Management (Voorburg, the Netherlands 22-24 May 2006), UNSD is working in close collaboration with other international agencies/organizations building on synergies and existing programmes on IWRM.

4. The proposed implementation strategy comprises the following four components:

- (a) Development of practical guidelines for the establishment of a water statistics programme in countries and the compilation of the water accounts standard tables;
- (b) Development of training and promotion material;
- (c) Development of a technical cooperation programme consisting of regional activities as well as pilot projects in selected countries in various regions;
- (d) Harmonisation of international data collection activities with the SEEAW concepts and definitions.

5. Each of these components of the implementation strategy is discussed in detail in Sections B to E. Section F presents questions to the UNCEEAA.

## **B. Practical guidelines on water statistics and accounts**

6. UNSD is working on the development of a manual on water statistics. The manual will provide an agreed list of variables and agreed definitions on water statistics that countries are recommended to compile. The list of variables is fully harmonized with the variables of the SEEAW but it is more detailed to cover additional variables related to water needed for sector specific policies and analyses.

7. The manual will also provide practical guidelines on how to collect/compile the variables as well as on how to populate the standard tables of the SEEAW based on best practices. The manual is expected to be discussed at an expert group meeting in early December.

### **C. Training and promotion**

8. In addition to the SEEAW and the manual on water statistics, there is a need to develop a promotion and training programme. While the SEEAW has gained a foothold of acceptance in the statistical community it will continue to need to be promoted more broadly in the users community. Following up on the outcome on the User-producer Conference on Water Accounting for Integrated Water Resources Management (Voorburg, the Netherlands 22-24 May 2006), organized under the auspices of the UNCEEA, UNSD is working in close collaboration with the water community to raise awareness of the SEEAW and its features as the information system for hydrological-economic information for IWRM in the user community.

9. Further, UNSD is developing training modules to support the implementation of the SEEAW based on existing training material developed and used in international workshops and training by UNSD. The presentations used in these trainings are available on the UNSD website.

10. Several activities are being undertaken by UNSD in collaboration with various partners. The following are worth noting:

- (a) Pilot programme on the implementation of the SEEAW, in collaboration with GWP, IUCN, Columbia University and UNDP;
- (b) Training programme on the SEEAW in collaboration with UNESCO-IHE.

11. UNSD is a member of the UN Water Task Force on Monitoring Integrated Water Resource Management. One of the objectives of the Task Force is to promote the use of the SEEAW as the information system to develop outcome indicators for Integrated Water Resources Management. To this end, pilot programme on the implementation of the SEEAW in 4 countries will be launched soon as a joint effort of GWP, Colombia University, IUCN, UNDP and UNSD. A scoping meeting with the participation of donors, the IWRM community and the statistical community is tentatively planned for the end of this year.

12. UNESCO-IHE carries out training programmes on Integrated Water Resources Management for hydrologists on a regular basis. UNSD has been invited on a trial basis to provide a one-week training on the SEEAW as part of the IWRM training in September 2007. The expectation is that the training on the SEEAW will become part of the regular curriculum of the training programme of UNESCO-IHE and be extended for a period longer than one week.

13. In time additional material promoting the implementation of the SEEAW and its use in IWRM policies will be developed.

## **D. Technical assistance programme**

14. There is an increasing demand from countries to develop a technical assistance programme on the implementation of the SEEAW. UNSD has received to date requests of technical assistance from about 40 countries (see Annex I).

15. The UNSD technical assistance programme on the implementation of the SEEAW has a strong regional component and is built on close collaboration with UN regional commissions and other international agencies active at the country level, in particular UNDP, UNDSO, the World Bank and UNEP. In addition, UNSD is building a close cooperation with Medstat programme of Eurostat which has a component on water accounts and ESCWA which has recently been awarded a project for advancing and environmental-economic accounting and statistics in the region.

16. The technical assistance programme consists of regional workshops bringing together countries from the various region of the world accompanied with technical assistance to pilot countries which should serve as examples for the region. The programme is designed in phases over a period of three years. It is briefly outlined below:

- Phase 1 – Introductory regional workshop aimed at raising awareness of SEEAW and getting support for implementation of SEEAW by senior government officials from both user and producer communities. The key aim of the workshop is to have countries understand the usefulness of the SEEAW for IWRM policies and commit to the implementation of the SEEAW. The workshop will also provide information which will enable countries to begin work on pilot accounts. During this phase 1 or 2 countries in the region would be selected on the basis of their interest as pilot case studies for the region.
- Phase 2 – Expert level workshop aimed at sharing experiences in the development of pilot accounts starting from existing information in countries and providing additional tools to assist the production of accounts. Training on the compilation of water statistics from existing sources as well as on how to populate the standard tables and responding to international questionnaires will be provided. A set of standard tables for the region could be developed taking into account common water concerns in the region and availability of data. The pilot country experience could be of help to other countries in the region starting on the SEEAW implementation;
- Phase 3 – Countries will again share experiences in the development of the standard tables for the region so that best practices in the compilation of the tables as well as more broadly in the development and enhancement of a water statistics programme can be identified.

17. In-between workshops countries will be supported by the regional networks, electronic communication facilitated by UNSD and other agencies active in the region.

18. A draft timetable of technical assistance activities is presented below:

- (1) Meetings and Workshops on the SEEAW

- Workshop on Environment-Economic Approaches for Medstat II countries (Luxembourg, February 2007)
- London Group on Environmental Accounting – two sessions on water accounting (Johannesburg, South Africa. March 2007)
- Expert Group Meeting on Environmental Accounts for ESCWA region (Cairo, Egypt. 5-7 June 2007)
- Workshop on Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water for ELAC region (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. 21-25 July 2007)
- Course on SEEAW at the UNESCO-IHE (Delft, The Netherlands, 24-28 September 2007)
- Workshop on Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water for ESCAP region (2008)
- Workshop on Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water for SADC region (2008)
- Workshop on Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water for Eastern Europe/Western Asia (2008)

(2) Country assistance

- Namibia (April 2007)
- South Africa (March 2007)
- Jordan (June 2007)
- China (August 2007 and 2008)
- Additional countries to be determined

## **E. Harmonisation of international data collection activities**

19. There are ongoing efforts to harmonize international data collection activities with the SEEAW terms and definitions. International data collection activities on water statistics consist of questionnaires conducted by UNSD/UNEP and OECD/Eurostat, and FAO. The UNSD/UNEP and the OECD/Eurostat questionnaires are broadly consistent with the SEEAW some adjustments are still needed to fully align them with the SEEAW terms and definitions. The FAO questionnaire is broadly consistent with the SEEAW for what concerns the part on water resources. For what concerns the part on water use by the economy the FAO questionnaire does not follow the ISIC classification. Efforts to harmonize the definitions of water statistics variables are under way by the Subgroup on Water Statistics of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics.

20. UNSD plans to harmonize its water statistics questionnaire with the SEEAW in the next round of data collection activities starting in the spring 2008. It is also anticipated that the Eurostat/OECD questionnaire will also be harmonized with the SEEAW definitions. The proposed updated questionnaire will be discussed at the Expert Group meeting on the Manual on Water Statistics in December.

## **F. Questions for UNCEEA**

21. The UNCEEA may wish to express its views on the following questions:

- (1) *Does the UNCEEA agree with the 4 components of the proposed strategy for the implementation of the SEEAW [para 4]?*
- (2) *Does the UNCEEA agree with the thrust of the manual on water statistics [paras 6 and 7]?*
- (3) *Does the UNCEEA agree with training and promotion programme proposed {paras 8-13}?*
- (4) *Does the UNCEEA agree with the technical assistance programme on the SEEAW implementation [paras 14-18]? Are there other on-going activities related to water statistics that could be part of the technical assistance programme?*
- (5) *Does the UNCEEA agree with the plan to harmonize international data collection activities with the SEEAW and the proposed time schedule {paras 19-20}?*

## **Annex I: Countries Requesting Assistance with Water Accounting**

1. Algeria
2. Armenia
3. Bahamas
4. Bolivia
5. Bulgaria
6. Burkina Faso
7. China
8. Colombia
9. Cuba
10. Dominican Republic
11. Egypt
12. Georgia
13. Guatemala
14. India
15. Indonesia
16. Israel
17. Jordan
18. Korea, Republic of
19. Kuwait
20. Lebanon
21. Mauritius
22. Mexico
23. Mongolia
24. Morocco
25. Mozambique
26. Namibia
27. Nauru
28. Nepal
29. Palestine
30. Panama
31. Papua New Guinea
32. Philippines
33. South Africa
34. Suriname
35. Tanzania
36. Trinidad and Tobago
37. Tunisia
38. Turkey
39. Ukraine
40. United Arab Emirates