



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

ESA/STAT/AC.157
UNCEEA/3/5

**Third Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on
Environmental-Economic Accounting
New York, 26-27 June 2008
United Nations Secretariat, Conference Room C**

**Note on the mandate and governance of the new United Nations
Committee of Experts**

Paper prepared by UNSD

(for discussion)

Note on the mandate and governance of the new United Nations Committee of Experts

1. The annex to this note presents a paper on the mandate, governance arrangements of the new Committee of Experts. It was prepared in response to the recommendation of the international statistical community to broaden the mandate of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting beyond environmental-economic accounting to cover environment statistics and change its name and representation. It is an elaboration of the paper on the *Governance structure of the UNCEEA* which was distributed electronically to the Committee members on 22 April 2008.

2. To reflect the broader mandate of the UNCEEA, it is proposed that the new name of the UNCEEA be United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental Accounting and Statistics (UNCEEAS). UNCEEAS is the name used in the paper in the annex.

3. The paper elaborates on the role and responsibilities of the various groups/organizations involved, in particular on the establishment of the Advisory Group evolving from the London Group on Environmental Accounting.

4. The idea of establishing an Advisory Group to the UNCEEA was discussed during the meeting of the Bureau of the UNCEEA in Oslo (14 April 2008). The Bureau considered various options for strengthening the London Group on Environmental Accounting to ensure that the SEEA revision process is endowed with the proper technical resources. The Bureau considered the establishment of a formalized Group – similar to the Advisory Group on National Accounts – as a viable option. The mandate of the Advisory Group is sketched in the paper but further details on the functioning and responsibility of the group will be discussed during the UNCEEA meeting.

5. A previous version of this paper has been discussed by the Bureau of the UNCEEA. The revised version is submitted for adoption to the UNCEEA at its Third meeting in June 2008. The results of the UNCEEA deliberation will be submitted to the UNSC for its adoption.

6. Questions for the Committee on the paper in the Annex are presented below:

1) *Do you agree with the proposed name of the Committee “United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental Accounting and Statistics” (UNCEEAS)?*

2) *Do you agree with the new mandate of the UNCEEAS [para 4]?*

- 3) *Do you agree with the programme of work of the UNCEEAS [para 5]?*
- 4) *Do you agree with the overall governance arrangements [Figure 1]?*
- 5) *Do you agree with the role of the UNCEEAS [paras 8-10]?*
- 6) *Do you agree with the composition of the UNCEEAS [paras 11-14]?*
- 7) *Do you agree with the role of the Bureau [paras 15-17]?*
- 8) *Do you agree with the role of the Chair [para 18]?*
- 9) *Do you agree with the role of the Secretariat [para 19]?*
- 10) *Do you agree with the establishment of the Advisory Group on Environmental Accounting and Statistics [para 20-22]?*
- 11) *Is it necessary to reconsider the terms of reference of existing groups with the establishment of the Advisory Group? Do you agree that the London Group on Environmental Accounting evolves into the Advisory Group?*

Annex

Mandate and governance of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental Accounting and Statistics (UNCEEAS)

A. Background

1. The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its thirty-sixth session in March 2005 established the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) with the objectives of: (a) mainstreaming environmental-economic accounting and related statistics; (b) elevating the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) to an international statistical standard; and (c) advancing the implementation of the SEEA in countries. Terms of Reference of the UNCEEA were adopted by the Bureau of the UNSC in November 2005.

2. Since 2005, the UNSC has adopted the programme of work of the UNCEEA, consisting of (a) coordination; (b) promotion and implementation of the accounts; (c) advancement of methodology; and (d) harmonization of data collection activities with environmental-economic accounting concepts and definitions. It also monitors on regular basis its progress of work.

3. Recently, the Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics (Oslo, 14-16 April 2008) recommended the UNCEEA to take on the task of overseeing the development of climate change related statistics. To this end, it requested the UNCEEA to consider expanding its mandate beyond environmental-economic accounting to cover environment statistics and changing its name and representation to reflect the broader mandate.

B. Mandate

4. The mandate of the UNCEEAS are (a) to provide strategic vision, direction and coordination to mainstream environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting in national, regional and international statistical systems; (b) to develop normative international statistical standards and supporting methodological documents on environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting; (c) to promote the development of integrated databases at international, regional and national level on environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting; (d) to promote the implementation of international statistical standards of environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting in countries; and (e) to promote the use of official statistics in scientific and policy-making communities.

5. To fulfil its mandate, the UNCEEAS has the following programme of work, which encompasses the following 5 areas:

- (a) *Coordination:* The UNCEEAS should foster coordination, integration and complementarity of programmes in environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting among international and regional agencies and countries. Leadership, a single focal point, and a coordinated vision among international and regional agencies active in the field of environment are considered necessary to raise the profile of environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting.

The UNCEEAS coordinates and provides vision, direction and prioritisation to ensure that existing and newly established groups work in complementary fashion. These groups include the soon-to-be established Advisory Group, the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, the Inter-Secretariat Working Group (ISWG) on Environment Statistics, the ISWG on Energy Statistics and other expert groups that might be established within the scope of its mandate.

The UNCEEAS should encourage strategic planning, coordination and complementarity of programmes at the regional and international level as well as the national level.

- (b) *Methodological development for normative standards and other research:* The UNCEEAS's role is to oversee the methodological development of environment statistics as well as environmental-economic accounting. This involves managing the current and future revisions of the SEEA and its elevation to the level of an international statistical standard as well as contributing to the international debate on measuring sustainability. It also involves managing and setting the direction for the preparation of the suite of publications in support of the new SEEA standard. These include publications on specific resources or SEEA modules (e.g. SEEA-Water, SEEA-Energy, SEEA-MFA, etc.) as well as international recommendations on basic statistics (e.g. International Recommendations on Water Statistics, International Recommendations on Energy Statistics, International Recommendations on Waste Statistics, etc.) and compilation guidelines and quality assessment frameworks providing best practices on data collection and compilation.
- (c) *Development of integrated databases:* 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 UNCEEAS's role 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 standard tables should be used as the reference set of information that countries should compile taking into consideration countries' priorities and environmental concerns. The UNCEEAS 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.

(d) *Implementation of environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting and statistical capacity building:* The increased demand by the national, regional and international agenda of environment information has produced a challenge and an opportunity for the statistical community to mainstream environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting. The elevation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting to the level of an international statistical standard and the development of supporting international recommendations (e.g. International Recommendations on Water Statistics and International Recommendations on Energy Statistics) call for its widespread implementation and statistical capacity building in countries. The UNCEEAS should develop a concerted implementation strategy encompassing basic environment statistics and their integration in the SEEA in support of decision-making at the country level and for international comparisons.

(e) *Promotion of environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting:* Environment statistics as well as environmental-economic accounting are relatively new areas of statistics which often do not enjoy the same priority as other 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 and climate change.

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. The System of Environmental Economic Accounting has proven its potential and added value in many areas of environmental-economic analysis. Building on existing experiences, the statistical community should take an active role in the promotion of the SEEA for environmental-economic analysis and for formulating international priorities based on users' needs. This is the case, for example, in 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.

The role of the UNCEEAS is to promote, on behalf of the statistical community, the role of the statistical systems in providing good quality, relevant and timely information to address the new challenges posed by the policy agenda.

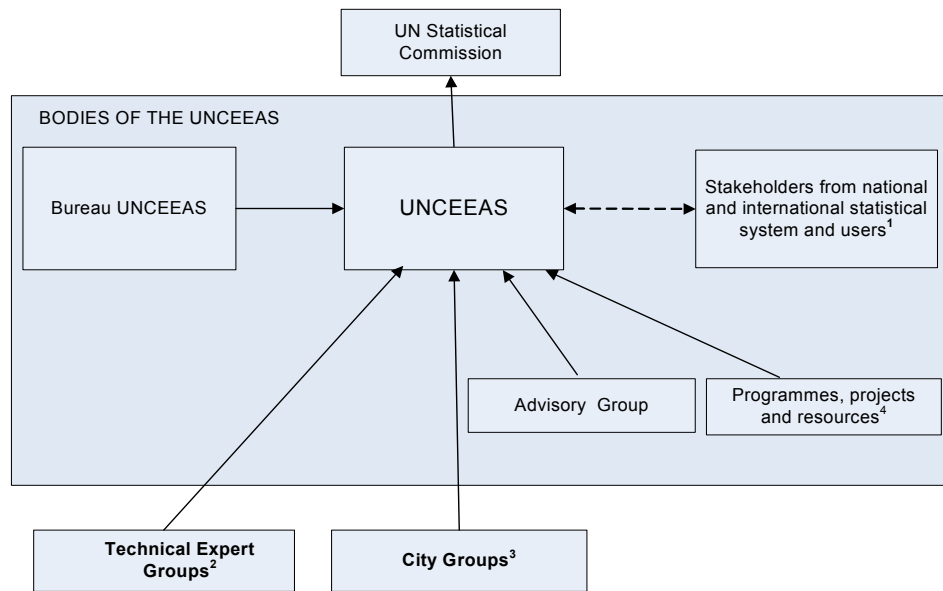
(f) *Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues:* The national and international community has placed several emerging issues related to the environment high on their political agenda. They include cross-cutting issues such as climate change and sustainable development. Until present, 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.

C. Governance arrangements

6. The major elements of the governance arrangements are shown in the attached diagram in Figure 1. The description of the governance follows the diagram and it covers the managerial functions, roles and responsibilities of groups/organizations. The bodies in the square represents the bodies of the UNCEEAS. The technical subgroups and city groups are presented outside the square because they have been established and report to other bodies, although they work with the UNCEEAS.

Figure 1. Governance of the UNCEEAS



Key
 ← → = Consults, liaises
 ← = Reports to

Legend:
 1. Users include for example academia, line ministries, etc.
 2. These groups include, for example, OECD-WGEIO-MFA, Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development (WGSSD), Electronic Discussion Groups
 3. These include, for example, Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, etc.
 4. Programmes include specific projects. One of the projects as part of the programme to advance methodology is the revision of the SEEA and all the resources involved in the project.

1. United Nations Statistical Commission

7. The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) is the entity that establishes the UNCEEAS and approves its mandate, work programme, governance and monitors its progress of work.

2. United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental Accounts and Statistics

8. The United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental Accounts and Statistics (UNCEEAS) is established by the Statistical Commission to carry out the mandate and programme of work outlined in Section B. The UNCEEAS is also responsible for reporting the progress of its programme of work to the UN Statistical Commission.

9. Within each area of its work programme, the UNCEEAS undertakes specific projects engaging existing city groups and/or other expert groups and establishing new groups as needed to carry out the work programme. For large projects, such as the revision of the SEEA, it may be necessary to develop project management frameworks for adoption by the UNCEEAS.

10. Broadly speaking, the UNCEEAS undertakes the following tasks in respect of the programmes under its responsibility:

- (a) *Strategic planning*, including providing strategic direction to the projects; ensuring their complementarity and proper coordination; and agreeing on their governance arrangements;
- (b) *Programming and monitoring*, including agreeing with the work plan, schedule, communication strategy and budget of the projects; assigning or negotiating tasks of the technical expert groups; tracking progress made by the projects and ensuring adequate and effective review of technical matters;
- (c) *Reporting*, including reporting to the Statistical Commission on the projects within its mandate; receiving regular reports from the technical groups; and liaising with stakeholders, managing their expectations and gaining their support;
- (d) *Resource mobilization*, including ensuring that projects are adequately resourced; raising funds as needed; recommending staffing for the projects (e.g. project manager and editor for the SEEA revision); and monitoring cash and in-kind budgets.

Composition

11. High-level representation would be necessary to ensure the strategic role of the UNCEEAS in setting priorities, bringing forward a research agenda, taking decisions on standards and developing strategic visions.

12. Members of the UNCEEAS comprise high-level experts from national governments and international organizations with a broad range of experience in statistics and the use of the accounts. Also members would be selected so as to ensure equitable regional representation.

13. Given the wide of range of topics covered by the UNCEEAS as well as the need to keep the UNCEEAS of a manageable size so as to ensure in depth discussion, the UNCEEAS would comprise initially 25 countries/organizations with a maximum representation of two experts per country.

14. Members would be named to the UNCEEAS for an initial period of three years, which may be renewed.

3. Bureau of the UNCEEAS

15. The UNCEEAS agreed on the creation of a Bureau to execute those tasks and activities in-between meetings for which it has received delegated authority by the UNCEEAS, including the oversight and day-to-day management of the projects under its responsibility. Decisions taken by the Bureau under the delegated authority of the UNCEEAS should be reported to the UNCEEAS.

16. The Bureau, under delegated authority of the UNCEEAS, will carry out the activities and tasks in relation of strategic planning, programming and monitoring, reporting and resource mobilization for the projects within its mandate.

17. The Bureau of the UNCEEAS consists of members of the UNCEEAS at the senior level in national and international statistical offices. It includes the Chair, the Secretariat, senior officials from four to five countries/international organizations elected by the UNCEEAS from among its members for a period of 3 years¹. The Chair may invite experts, chairs of the city and expert groups, to participate to the Bureau meetings.

4. Chair

18. The UNCEEAS would elect, among its members, the chair for a period of 3 years renewable for one term. The role of the Chair would be to develop, in close cooperation with the Secretariat, a multi-year and an annual work programme for the UNCEEAS, monitor progress of the various components of the programme and set the agenda for the meetings.

¹ Since February 2008, the Bureau consists of: Walter Radermacher (Chair UNCEEAS and President Federal Statistical Office Germany), Rashad Cassim (Deputy Director General, Statistics South Africa), Estrella Domingo (Deputy Secretary-General, National Statistics Coordination Board, Philippines), Pieter Everaers (Director, Eurostat), Peter Harper (Deputy Australian Statistician, Australian Bureau of Statistics), Peter van de Ven (Head of National Accounts, Statistics Netherlands), Karen Wilson (Assistant Chief Statistician, Statistics Canada), UNSD (Secretariat UNCEEAS).

5. Secretariat

19. The permanent Secretariat of the UNCEEAS and its Bureau is UNSD. It is its main source of logistical and administrative support and receives guidance for this support from the UNCEEAS and its Bureau. Among the tasks that the Secretariat undertakes are the following:

- (a) Circulate decisions to countries and/or regional and other expert meetings for discussion;
- (b) Manage the UNCEEAS website;
- (c) Prepare the correspondence with the Statistical Commission members and national statistical offices;
- (d) Prepare reports to the Statistical Commission on behalf of the UNCEEAS and its Bureau;
- (e) Provide logistical and other support to the UNCEEAS and its Bureau.

6. Advisory Group on Environmental Accounting and Statistics

20. An Advisory Expert Group is established to support the UNCEEAS in its deliberations on normative and methodological matters concerning environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting and to advise it on proposal in that regard for submission to the United Nations Statistical Commission. The Advisory Group is a body of the UNCEEAS and, as such, falls under the overall management and coordination of the UNCEEAS.

21. The Advisory Group will evolve from the London Group on Environmental Accounting and will play an essential role in the revision process and upkeep of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and in the preparation and revision of other methodological documents on environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting.

22. The composition of the Advisory Group reflects various areas of expertise in environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting. It also reflects a balanced geographical representation.

7. City Groups and other Technical Expert Groups

23. Existing city groups and other technical expert groups may be engaged to work on specific projects under the responsibility of the UNCEEAS. New Groups may also be created to assist the UNCEEAS in carrying out its work programme. The UNCEEAS will coordinate, within its mandate, the city groups and other expert groups working in environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting as mandated by the UNSC.

24. Specific tasks and responsibilities of the city groups and technical expert groups will be agreed with the UNCEEAS. Terms of reference for the tasks related to the projects will be formulated with every expert group. They will include specifications on deliverables, timelines and work arrangements for monitoring the technical discussions and for reporting recommendations to the UNCEEAS.