

Workshop on Environmental-Economic Accounting

Jointly organized by BPS-Statistics Indonesia and United Nations Statistics Division
(Jakarta, Indonesia 23-27 September 2002)

Conclusions

1. The presentations and discussions during the workshop have clearly shown that countries have made efforts and considerable progress in implementing selected modules of the SEEA-2000. This was also the result of the previous training Workshop on Environmental-Economic Accounting held in Manila, 18-22 September 2000 under the same project “Strengthening Statistical Capacity in the Countries in the ASEAN Region”.
2. Participants expressed the need of having a strategic plan for the implementation of the SEEA in the region. It was suggested that this plan be coordinated and designed by UNSD and ESCAP with inputs from the countries.
3. It was noted that there is a need for: a) developing an implementation programme for the SEEA for countries at an early stage of development of environment statistics; and b) strengthening existing programmes of environmental accounting in countries with already some experience so as to broaden their knowledge. Countries recognized the need for technical assistance and stressed the importance of complementing workshops with country projects which would assist them in setting up environmental accounting programmes and applying the concepts learnt at the workshops.
4. Participants expressed concerns about the complexity of the SEEA-2000 and requested UNSD to develop training material on the SEEA compilation as well as update the SEEA software. The software would facilitate the compilation of the accounts and serve as a training tool on the SEEA implementation.
5. During the workshop the importance of harmonization of concepts and definition emerged. The participants recognized that the SEEA is a major step forward to this end and that countries should make efforts towards adopting the new SEEA guidelines.
6. The importance of the SEEA framework towards building a common vocabulary among the different experts (e.g. statisticians and hydrologists for water accounts, biologists for fishery accounts, mining engineers for mineral and energy resources accounts, etc.) was stressed. In this regard, UNSD’s initiative of creating an electronic discussion group on the harmonization of terms and definitions in water accounting was very well received. Many participants expressed interest in joining the discussion forum.
7. It was recognized that the SEEA is a very useful tool for modelling direct and indirect impacts of resource use and emissions on the economy and on the environment. For

example, forest logging may result in destruction of watersheds, which in turn could cause flooding and have a negative impact on agricultural production. This illustrates the importance of linking the various resource accounts – e.g. forest and water accounts, fish and land-use accounts – with the economic accounts for designing macro economic policies.

8. It was noted that cross-sectoral integration of data should be done, when possible, by aggregation of coherent spatial units (e.g. large watersheds, river basins, etc.) using new technologies, such as GIS and remote sensing, in order to reconcile physical data with administrative boundaries.
9. Country presentations showed that environmental-economic accounts could be compiled with limited data. At the initial stage of the implementation, if data are not available, estimates could be used to fill the data gaps. The estimates should be identified, explained and possibly replaced with actual data when they become available.
10. It was noted that there is a need for providing guidance on how to measure and value non-economic aspects of the environment such as social, and spiritual values even if only applicable at a local level.
11. It was recognized that the SEEA-2000 is an improvement as to the 1993 SEEA as regards the description of quality characteristics of the environment, especially in physical terms. However, it was noted that more work is needed in terms of valuation of non-economic benefits of the ecosystems.
12. Putting together economic and environmental information in a common framework requires coordination among various stakeholders within each country. It was recognized the importance of the existence of a political will to establish a coordination mechanism for the compilation of the accounts.
13. It was stressed the importance of building cooperation between data producers from different line ministries and statistical offices. Environmental data as well as expertise on the various dimensions of the environment are scattered in various line ministries. Data from different sources are often inconsistent. The statistical office should play an active role in coordinating the various data sources and harmonizing concepts and definitions.
14. Many participants mentioned the importance of informing policy-makers of the usefulness of environmental-economic accounting in designing and monitoring the impact of economic and environmental policies. National statistical offices should play a more active role in the advocating the uses and applications of the SEEA in policy making.
15. It was recognized that the SEEA can be used as a framework to derive harmonized set of indicators which link economic and environmental concerns. In this regard, it was

noted that 24 of the 28 indicators of sustainable development¹, related to the economic and environmental themes, can be derived from the SEEA. It was also noted that the SEEA can be used for a much more in-depth analysis (e.g. designing economic instruments and resource management policies, assessing alternative development paths, etc.).

16. It was noted that even countries for which are at the initial stages of development of environmental information, should design their environment statistics programs in line with the SEEA concepts and definitions.

¹ Developed as a result of the United Nations Commission of Sustainable Development Work Programme of Indicators of Sustainable Development in 2000. (United Nations, 2001. *Indicators of Sustainable Development – Guidelines and Methodologies*)