

History of the London Group

The London Group on Resource Accounting was established in 1993 as a city group (by the UN Statistical Commission) with the objectives of:

- a) to play a leadership role in defining international best practices in the theory and practice of environmental accounting within the framework of the System of National Accounts;
- b) to provide a forum for the sharing of national and international expertise in this field; and
- c) to encourage the adoption of best practices in the field by promoting the results of the Group's efforts via proceedings volumes, concepts and methods manuals, operational manuals and other means.

1994-2005

In 1993 the United Nations published the *Handbook of National Accounting: Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting* (SEEA). The discussion of concepts and methods had not come to a final conclusion and the handbook was issued as an "interim" version. After the publication of the SEEA - 1993, several developing and developed countries started experimenting with the compilation of the SEEA.

Between 1994 and 1997 the Group has been an informal group of statisticians from national statistical offices and international organization. With the agreement by the Statistical Commission in 1998 to undertake a review of the SEEA 1993, Statistics Canada took on the role of Secretariat of the London Group. Further, the management of the Group was under the responsibility of the Coordinating Committee composed of the most recent and future host of the London Group meetings, Statistics Canada as secretariat of the Group, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the World Bank, the publishing agencies of the *Handbook of National Accounting: Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting 2003* (SEEA-2003). The International Monetary Fund was added as a publishing agency at a later stage and did not become a member of the Coordinating Committee. The main responsibility of the Coordinating Committee was the steering the SEEA revision.

After the publication of the SEEA-2003, the Coordinating Committee was responsible for organising the meetings of the London Group. Because of this change in focus, the Coordinating Committee was reduced in size and composed of the past and future host of the London Group' meetings, Statistics Canada as secretariat and the UNSD. Three sub-groups of the London Group were established in 2003 to address specific issues and develop compilation guidelines. They include:

- a) Sub-Group on Water Accounting, moderated by UNSD. The Sub-Group contributed to the *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water* (SEEAW), which has recently been adopted as an international statistical standard by the UN Statistical Commission at its 38th session;
- b) Sub-Group on Mineral and Energy Accounts, moderated by Statistics Denmark. The Sub-Group carried out a survey on country practices in the

- implementation of mineral and energy asset accounts and developed guidelines for a handbook on mineral and energy asset accounts;
- c) Sub-Group on the Expansion of the SEEA to social aspects, moderated by Statistics Sweden. The Sub-Group prepared discussion papers for discussion at the London Group.

2005-present

An important event in the international environment having repercussions on environmental-economic accounting and related statistics is the creation of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEAA), established by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2005 with the objectives of:

- a) mainstreaming environmental-economic accounting and related statistics;
- b) elevating the System of integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA-2003) to an international statistical standard; and
- c) advancing the implementation of the SEEA at the global level.

The programme of work of the UNCEEAA encompasses the following elements:

- a) coordination of groups working on environmental-economic accounting and related statistics;
- b) promotion and implementation of the SEEA;
- c) methodological research; and
- d) harmonization of data collection activities with environmental-economic accounting concepts and definitions.

Of particular relevance to the London Group are the coordination and the advancement of methodology.

Given its expertise and its role in advancing the methodologies in environmental-economic accounting, the London Group has accepted the request of the UNCEEAA to develop a list of issues and solving a significant number of those issues in the research agenda for the revision of the SEEA-2003 as part of its work programme. Further, the London Group has re-evaluated its role and governance structure in order to meet the request of the Committee to undertake the research within an agreed time schedule.