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Programme of Work of the UNCEEA

Paper prepared by UNSD

(for information)

Programme of work for the UNCEEA

Two years and five years programme

A. 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 The UNCEEA at its Fourth Meeting (New York, 24-26 June 2009) discussed a proposal for the programme of work prepared by the Secretariat and requested that the programme of work include the mandate of the UNCEEA and provide a list of outputs and priorities. A revised work programme was submitted to the forty-first session of the UNSC in 2010 as background document².

2. It is suggested that the programme of work is a live document and be updated on a regular basis, as a minimum twice a year namely in December and May. This would allow its distribution to the UN Statistical Commission and before the meeting of the UNCEEA.

3. The current version of the programme of work reflects the views of the UNCEEA at its 5th meeting in particular with regard to the structure and content of the document. Section B of the programme of work presents the mandate of the UNCEEA as agreed by the UN Statistical Commission at its forty first session.³ Section C presents the new section on calendar of events. Annex I presents the activities and outputs of the city and expert groups as well as international agencies beyond UNSD that are within the mandate of the UNCEEA.

4. The document provides the programme of work of the UNCEEA for the two and five years programme. Annex II also presents a consolidated list of deliverables and the expected dates of completion.

B. Mandate of the UNCEEA

5. The mandate of the Committee encompasses environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics. “Supporting statistics” is intended to include relevant environment, energy and other statistics that support environmental-economic accounting. The mandate of the Committee is to (a) provide strategic vision, direction and coordination to mainstream environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics in national, regional and international statistical systems; (b) develop normative international statistical standards and supporting methodological documents on environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics; (c) promote the development of databases at international, regional and national level on environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics; (d) promote the implementation of international statistical standards of environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics in countries; and (e) promote the use of environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics in scientific and policymaking communities.“

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 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc10/BG-UNCEEA-Programme.pdf>

³ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc10/BG-UNCEEA.pdf>

6. To fulfill its mandate, the programme of work of the Committee in environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics is organized according to the following six areas encompasses six areas: (a) coordination: to foster collaboration, integration and complementarity of programmes; (b) methodological development for normative statistical standards and other research: to oversee development of standards and other methodological documents; (c) development of databases: to ensure databases are based on international statistical standards and international recommendations; (d) implementation and statistical capacity building: to develop concerted implementation strategies encompassing relevant supporting statistics and their integration in the SEEA; (e) promotion: to mainstream the environmental-economic accounting and relevant supporting statistics in the statistical systems; and (f) formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues: to engage prominently in the international agenda in articulating a coordinated statistical response, for example on climate change, sustainability and natural resources management.

C. Programme of work for the UNCEEA

7. The highest priority in the work programme of the UNCEEA is the revision of the SEEA and the elevation of the central framework⁴ to an internationally agreed statistical conceptual framework. The international statistical community considers environmental-economic accounting as a sufficiently developed statistical domain to be mainstreamed as part of official statistics. The United Nations Statistical Commission has entrusted the UNCEEA with providing management and oversight to the revision process and requested that the central framework of the revised SEEA be submitted to the UNSC for adoption in February 2012. Because of the importance to provide an agreed statistical conceptual framework in the domain of environmental-economic accounting, work on the revision of the SEEA central framework has been accorded the highest priority.

8. Work on the SEEA experimental ecosystem accounts, previously referred to Volume 2 and the extensions and applications of the SEEA, previously referred as Volume 3 is also under way in order to ensure the delivery of these parts of the SEEA to the Statistical Commission in February 2013.

9. In addition to the revision of the SEEA, the two years programme of work of the UNCEEA includes the preparations of the SEEA sub-system for energy (SEEA-Energy). The SEEA-Energy is fully consistent with the SEEA standard. Both the SEEA-Water and the SEEA-Energy, add depth on the respective subject matter and provide input in the revision of the SEEA. In particular, the drafting of the sub-systems contributed to resolving the issues on the research agenda, to developing a set of standard tables for the specific sub-systems, engaging specialized communities with specific expertise beyond environmental-economic accountants, providing textual input in the drafting of the revised SEEA.

10. The activities of the UNCEEA are organized on the basis of the 6 areas of the programme of work agreed by the UNCEEA. They include: (a) coordination; (b) methodological development for normative standards and other research; (c) development of databases; (d) implementation of environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics and statistical capacity building; (e) promotion; and (f) formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues.

(a) Coordination

⁴ Previously referred to as Volume 1 of the revised SEEA.

11. The UNCEEA fosters collaboration, integration and complementarity of programmes. It will continue to coordinate its activities with groups working on environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics. Annex I to this document presents the activities organized by city/expert groups working within the mandate of the UNCEEA.

(b) Methodological development for normative standards and other research

12. The Committee seeks coherence and consistency to the extent possible for the methodological development of environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics. This involves managing the revision of the SEEA and its elevation to the level of an internationally agreed statistical conceptual framework. It also involves managing and setting the direction for the preparation of the suite of publications in support of the revised SEEA. These include publications on specific resources or SEEA modules (e.g. SEEA-Water, SEEA-Energy, etc.) as well as related international recommendations for supporting statistics (e.g. International Recommendations for Water Statistics), compilation guidelines and quality assessment frameworks providing best practices on data collection and compilation.

13. Two years programme: The UNCEEA will seek coherence and consistency to the extent possible for the development of the following outputs:

- **Revised SEEA**

The central framework of the revised SEEA is expected to be submitted for adoption as an internationally agreed statistical conceptual framework to the UN Statistical Commission in 2012. Work on the experimental ecosystem accounts and on applications of the revised SEEA has started and is planned to be completed in 2013.

Lead agency: UNCEEA.

- **SEEA-Energy**

SEEA-Energy will provide standard concepts, definitions, classifications and tables and accounts for energy. The SEEA-Energy is expected to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission in 2012.

Lead agency: UNSD in cooperation with the London Group on Environmental Accounting and the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics

- **The revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES)**

The revised FDES will provide the conceptual framework for defining the scope and boundaries of environment statistics, its links with other statistical domains and the establishment of a core set of environment statistics. This work complements the SEEA. It is expected that the revised FDES will be submitted to UNSC in 2012

Lead agency: UNSD in cooperation with the Expert Group on the revision of the FDES and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Environment Statistics.

14. Five years programme: The UNCEEA will seek coherence and consistency to the extent possible for the development of the outputs listed below.

- **SEEA-Water**

SEEA-Water provides standard concepts, definitions tables and accounts for water. Part I was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission at its thirty-eight session as an

interim international statistical standard. The SEEA-Water will be reviewed upon completion of the SEEA to ensure consistency with the SEEA and possible extension on ecosystem accounts for water.

Lead agency: UNSD in cooperation with the London Group on Environmental Accounting.

- **Energy Statistics Compilers Manual (ESCM)**

The ESCM is intended to assist countries in the collection, compilation and dissemination of energy statistics according to standard concepts, definitions and classifications. Energy statistics is seen a set of statistics on energy that serves several purposes. As such, the ESCM will provide practical guidance for the collection of the data items in IRES and the compilation of energy balances and energy accounts. The ESCM will also describe the links between basic energy statistics and other statistics such as national accounts and climate change. The ESCM will focus on the description of good country practices relevant to all the phases of a modern statistical process in energy statistics: from the legal and institutional settings, data collection from various sources and data compilation to the assessment of data quality and dissemination. It is expected that ESCM will be completed in 2013.

Lead agency: UNSD in cooperation with the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics and the London Group on Environmental Accounting.

- **SEEA-Agriculture**

As a follow-up to the discussion at the fifth UNCEEA meeting in June 2010, a concrete proposal on the development of the SEEA - Agriculture and Rural Development, describing its scope and coverage, will be prepared in the medium-term programme of work.

Lead agency: FAO.

(c) **Development of databases**

15. Until recently environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting have developed in separate tracks. The role of the Committee is to ensure that the databases are based on international statistical standards and international recommendations.

16. Two years programme: In the short term, the activities will focus on harmonizing the international data collection and related databases with the SEEA-Water and the International Recommendations for Water Statistics.

17. Five years programme: In the medium term, activities will focus on harmonizing international data collection on the core tables of the SEEA.

(d) **Implementation and statistical capacity building**

18. The anticipated elevation of the SEEA and its sub-systems to the level of internationally-agreed statistical conceptual frameworks and the development of international recommendations (e.g. IRWS and IRES) will require a widespread implementation and statistical capacity building programme in countries.

19. Two years programme: In the short term, the focus will be on supporting and monitoring the implementation strategy for the SEEA-Water and the International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS). Compilation material on water statistics and accounts is being developed and posted on the UNSD website.

20. Five years programme: In the medium term, the implementation and statistical capacity building of the SEEA core tables and in particular energy and water.

(e) **Promotion**

21. Environmental-economic accounting and supporting 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 the environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics in the statistical systems in particular in response to the challenges posed by the users' community in particular with regard to natural resources management, sustainability and climate change.

22. At the same time, the statistical community has a role to play vis-à-vis the user 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. The Committee should engage at the national and international level to ensure the SEEA figures as one of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, referred to as Rio+20, which will take place in Rio in May 2012.

23. Activities will focus on the following:

- **Water accounting and statistics**

Demonstrating the usefulness of water accounts and statistics to the user community⁵ is necessary to ensure that the SEEA-Water and IRWS are embraced beyond the statistical community. In particular, policy oriented publication (20-30 pages) will present the main policy issues in the water sector and describe how the SEEA-Water accounts can help in providing the necessary information to respond to policy demand.

Lead agency: UNSD in cooperation with the World Water Assessment Programme.

- **Sustainable Consumption and Production/Green Economy**

A short policy-oriented publication (20-30 pages) starting from the policy questions relevant to SCP and the green economy and explaining the usefulness of the SEEA.

Lead agency: UNSD, DEFRA in collaboration with UNEP and OECD.

(g) **Formulation of a statistical response on emerging policy issues**

24. 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 sustainability. Progressively the statistical community should articulate a coordinated statistical response, based on the international statistical standards. The UNCEEA is well placed to consult with the statistical community in order to formulate such response.

C. CALENDAR OF EVENTS

25. The following events are scheduled to take place in the next two years:

⁵ See paper UNCEEA/4/16 for further details at:
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/meetings/lod4.htm>

Events	Location and dates	Organization
2011		
International Seminar on Green Economy and Official Statistics	6-8 July Seoul, Republic of Korea	UNSD
Meeting of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators	11-13 July Geneva, Switzerland	UNECE
ISI 2011 – Water Theme Day	21-26 Aug. Dublin, Ireland	ISI
London Group on Environmental Accounting	12-16 Sept. Stockholm Sweden	London Group
Expert Group Meeting on Energy Accounts	5-7 Oct. New York, USA	UNSD
Expert Meeting on Ecosystem Accounts	November	EEA, UNSD, World Bank
Expert Group Meeting on FDES	2-4 Nov. New York, USA	UNSD
2012		
Statistical Commission	February New York, USA	UNSD
World Water Forum	12-17 March Marseille France	World Water Council
4th World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policies	16-19 October (tbc), New Delhi, India	OECD
2013		
Statistical Commission	February New York, USA	UNSD

Annex I

Activities of the various city/expert groups and international agencies

London Group

26. This year the London Group on Environmental Accounting will continue to function as an advisory body for the SEEA revision process. Once the SEEA central framework is finalized, the London Group may shift its focus on issues related to the worldwide implementation of the SEEA. In coming years it may also resume its purpose as a platform for exchanging knowledge, experiences and standard setting of best practices.

27. In September of this year Statistics Sweden will host the 17th London Group meeting in Stockholm. The agenda is expected to cover issues around the drafting of the SEEA Central Framework, ecosystem accounting and exchange of recent experiences.

Oslo Group

28. The Oslo Group on Energy Statistics will continue its work to address methodological issues related to energy statistics and contribute to improved international standards and improved methods for official energy statistics as mandated by the UN Statistical Commission in 2005. With the adoption of the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics (IRES) by the UN Statistical Commission in February 2011, the work of the Oslo Group will focus in the next two years on the preparation of the Energy Statistics Compilers Manual (ESCM) to assist countries in the implementation of the recommendations. In particular, the Oslo Group will focus on the collection of country practices, the exchange of experience, and drafting/reviewing text of the ESCM. The ESCM is expected to be finalized in 2013.

OECD

Monitoring progress towards green growth

29. The report “Towards green growth – Monitoring progress: OECD indicators” was published on 25 May 2011 at the occasion of the meeting of the OECD Council at ministerial level. The report accompanies the OECD Green Growth Strategy. It includes a conceptual framework, proposals for a list of OECD indicators, and a measurement agenda to guide further work.

30. Further work on measurement and on indicators will be carried out in 2011-2012, and beyond (Committee on Statistics; Working Party on Environmental Information). The next report is planned for Q1 2013.

Measuring the progress of societies

31. Well-being and quality of life indicators will be presented in a new publication “How’s Life” (September 2011). One of the dimensions of well-being is the environmental quality of life, comprising measures that overlap with the same dimension in the set of Green Growth indicators (see above).

Measuring material flows and resource productivity

32. A report on “Resource productivity in the G8 and the OECD”, was prepared in the framework of the G8 Kobe 3R Action Plan, and released at the occasion of the 2011 summit of Heads of State and Government of G8 countries (26 May 2011, Deauville, France).

33. A report on the state of material resources and resource productivity is being prepared for 2012; a draft report will be discussed in November 2011 (meeting of the Working Party on Environmental Information).

34. A report on progress with the implementation of the OECD Council Recommendation on Resource productivity will be prepared for 2013, including progress on measurement and indicators.

35. Work starts on the valuation of selected natural resources at the interface of SEEA and the SNA. This work forms the basis for extended growth accounting and productivity measurement under inclusion of natural resources. An interim report is planned for end 2012.

Environmental data: review of the questionnaire on the state of the environment

36. Questionnaire section in inland waters: review ongoing; draft revised section (November 2011; meeting of the Working Party on Environmental Information); final revised section (Q1 2012). International co-operation: Eurostat; EEA; UNSD and UNEP; FAO; and IWG-ENV.

37. Questionnaire section on waste: review ongoing; draft revised section (November 2011; meeting of the Working Party on Environmental Information); final revised section (Q1 2012). International co-operation: Eurostat; EEA; UNSD and UNEP; Basel Convention; and IWG-ENV.

38. Other questionnaire sections will be reviewed in the course of 2012, including wild life and biodiversity, the marine environment, and land.

UNECE

Measuring Sustainable Development

39. In 2009, the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Working Group (WGSSD) published its work on **measuring sustainable development**⁶. The Report contributed to reaching a common understanding of the principles of measuring sustainability within the capital approach framework. A new Task Force for Measuring Sustainable Development was set up in 2009 to further pursue the conceptual development based on the capital approach with a broader perspective to include the distributional, i.e. quality of life aspects of sustainable development.

40. Progress has been made in the main directions given in the mandate of the Task Force, including on the measurement of human and social capital. The work on human capital has advanced in close collaboration with OECD, taking into account their ongoing project on human capital accounts. Progress has been also made on refining the set of sustainable development indicators proposed by the previous working group. At present, the analysed set of sustainable development indicators cover the “needs of the present generation”, the “needs of the future generations” and the “international dimension”. The indicators are based on a clear conceptual framework and aim to respond to the demands of the policy makers.

⁶ <http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/03.03f.e.htm>

41. The work of the Task Force is strongly linked to the work undertaken by other institutions, such as the most recent recommendations in the Report issued by the Stiglitz Commission, the European Commission's initiative "GDP and Beyond", and the OECD project on Measuring the Progress of Societies.

42. An extended Summary of the Report currently being prepared by the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force was consulted with the CES Bureau and the CES member countries in the beginning of 2011. Forty one responses were received to the consultations, including 37 from countries and 4 from international organizations. The respondents expressed support for the work and noted the good progress achieved. The consultation provided many useful ideas and comments to improve the Report being prepared by the Task Force. The final report is planned to be submitted to the CES 2012 plenary session.

Production of Environmental Indicators to further Strengthen Environmental Reporting

43. In 2009 a Joint Intersectoral Task Force on Environmental Indicators was established by two UNECE Sectoral Committees - the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians. The objective of the Task Force is to **improve environmental data production, further strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe**. The work brings together environmental experts and statisticians, a cooperation that is crucial to ensure improved methodologies and better time series data. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) actively contributes to the work of the Task Force.

44. During its three meetings, held in 2009-2010, the Task Force reviewed more than half of the 36 indicators from the *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (Indicator Guidelines)* that were endorsed at the Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in 2007. The Task Force also considered indicators that are important but are currently not included in the *Guidelines*, e.g. the indicator of environmental expenditures, agri-environmental indicators and energy and environment indicators.

45. In November 2010, the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians extended the mandate of the Task Force for two more years. The work will continue in 2011 to review the following indicators: Biological oxygen demand (BOD) and concentration of ammonium in rivers, Nutrients in freshwater, Nutrients in coastal seawaters, Area affected by soil erosion, Pesticide consumption, and Consumption of ozone-depleting substances. The next meeting⁷ of the Task Force will take place on 11-13 July 2011 in Geneva.

Statistics on Climate Change

46. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) discussed in October 2009 the proposed CES work on climate change in view of the outcomes of the 63rd UNECE session in February 2009 and the meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) in June 2009.

47. The UNECE has taken the lead to conduct a survey among the ECE member countries and beyond to assess whether the national statistical offices are involved in producing emission inventories and other climate change related statistics. For this purpose the

⁷ <http://live.unece.org/stats/documents/2011.07.environ.html>

secretariat, in consultation with experts from Statistics Norway, Statistics Finland, Eurostat and the European Environment Agency developed a questionnaire to study the state of the art in the member countries. The objective of the initiative is to identify issues of common concern for the countries that should be addressed at international level and find ways to strengthen the capability of countries to produce high quality statistics for climate change analysis.

48. The survey was carried out in the beginning of 2011 and the results are currently being analyzed. The outcome of the survey will be reviewed by the CES Bureau in November 2011 and decide on possible follow-up. The UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting expressed support for the work and has asked the UNECE to report on the outcome of the survey. The UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and the UN Statistics Division also asked the ECE secretariat to extend the survey to some countries outside the ECE region in order to ensure a more global coverage. The results of the survey and the decisions of the CES Bureau will be reported to the UNCEEA next year.

Annex II

Consolidated list of outputs and expected dates of completion

<i>Date</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>	<i>Organization</i>
September, 2011	"Glossy" report on the SEEA-Water	UNSD/WWAP
September, 2011	OECD Report: "How's Life" on well-being and quality of life indicators	OECD
November, 2011	OECD Draft Report on the state of material resources and resource productivity for discussion at the meeting of the Working Party on Environmental Information	OECD
December 2011	"Glossy" report on sustainable consumption and production and the green economy and relationship to SEEA	DEFRA
February, 2012	Revised SEEA - Central Framework	UNSD (Secretariat)
February, 2012	SEEA-Energy	UNSD
February, 2012	Revised FDES	UNSD
First quarter, 2012	Revised sections on inland waters and waste of OECD/Eurostat Questionnaire	OECD
June, 2012	Report to UNCEEA on results of survey of national statistical offices involvement in producing emission inventories and other climate change related statistics	UNECE
2012	Final Report of UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on measuring sustainable development to CES plenary session	UNECE
2012	Interim OECD report on valuation of selected natural resources	OECD
February, 2013	Revised SEEA - Conceptual framework for experimental ecosystem accounts and Applications and extensions	UNSD (Secretariat)
First quarter, 2013	Report of the OECD Working Party on Environmental Information on green growth indicators	OECD
2013	Compilation material on water statistics and accounts	UNSD
2013	Report on progress with implementation of the OECD Council Recommendation on resource productivity	OECD
2013 ?	Review of SEEA-Water	UNSD
2014 ?	Proposal for development of SEEA-Agriculture	FAO