

**PROPOSAL FOR THE CREATION OF A TASK FORCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL -
ECONOMIC ACCOUNTING****DRAFT****Background**

The release of the handbook of national accounting *Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting 2003*, which will be published by the United Nations, the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank has generated renewed interest in the countries on the implementation of these accounts.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has recently expressed its renewed interest in supporting activities of capacity building in environmental-economic accounting and in sensitizing the policymakers of the usefulness of environmental-economic accounting as a tool for decision-making. UNEP has indicated their interest in working in close cooperation with UNSD, the SEEA-2003 publishing agencies and the London Group in these areas.

Some regional commissions of the United Nations have also indicated interest in developing a programme of implementation in countries and have plans to organize regional training workshops.

The London Group, as indicated in its report to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-fifth session, continues to provide a forum for discussion of concepts and methods of environmental-economic accounting and for sharing country experience on the implementation of the accounts. Its work will focus on: (a) consolidating work in areas that are already advanced; (b) continue theoretical and practical development of components of environmental accounting that are not yet well advanced and (c) assist in promoting the implementation of environmental - economic Accounting for sustainable development in countries.

As a mode of operation, the London Group has created working groups on the following topics: (a) water accounting (moderated by UNSD); (b) mineral and energy resource accounting (moderated by Statistics Denmark); (c) policy uses of environmental - economic accounts (moderated by Statistics Sweden and the European Environment Agency); and (d) introducing social dimensions into environmental accounts.

Role of the Task Force

The objectives of the task force will be to develop an implementation strategy for Integrated Environmental-Economic Accounting (IEEA). This strategy could evolve in two parallel directions: (1) development of user-friendly methodologies and approaches for building capacity in environmental-economic accounting; and (2) promotion of environmental-economic accounting and its usefulness as a tool for sustainable development in the users' community.

To reach the above objectives the following activities may be undertaken:

- (a) Preparation of a user-friendly training handbook. The handbook could link the environmental accounts to indicators and policy issues. It will address an audience with little or no experience on environmental-economic accounting and countries with limited resources and data. Training material could also be developed to be used in regional workshops;
- (b) Organization of regional workshops (in cooperation with national and regional institutions and the UN Regional Commissions);
- (c) Support and facilitate the implementation of country projects;
- (d) Identification of fora and/or organization of meetings, which will bring together data users and producers both at the national as well as at the international level.

The Task Force will work in close cooperation with the London Group, which will remain the expert body, which will provide input in the activities of the Task Force. The Task Force will aim at ensuring that activities undertaken by agencies in this field are implemented in a complementary and coordinated fashion.

Composition of the Task Force

A lot of technical expertise lies in the countries, which are represented in the London Group. It is therefore suggested that the composition of the Task Force include both agencies and countries. Selected experts could be invited to participate in the meetings of the Task Force upon request.

A list of agencies, countries and experts invited to the First meeting of the Task Force is provided below.

The first meeting of the Task Force will take place on 20 -21 September in Copenhagen, Denmark. Terms of Reference, work programme and activities of the Task Force will be discussed and developed at the meeting and submitted to the Statistical Commission at its Thirty-sixth session in March 2005, for its approval.

Agencies

United Nations Statistics Division
 United Nations Division for Sustainable Development
 United Nations Environment Programme
 United Nations Development Programme
 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
 United Nations Economic Commissions
 International Monetary Fund
 World Bank (Statistics Department and Environment Department)
 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
 Eurostat
 European Environment Agency

Countries

AUSTALASIA: Australia
AFRICA: Morocco, South Africa
ASIA: China, India, Jordan, The Philippines
EUROPE: Denmark (member of the Coordinating Committee and host of the next London Group meeting), Germany, Sweden.
LATIN AMERICA: Mexico, Colombia
NORTH AMERICA: Canada (Secretary and member of the Coordinating Committee of the London Group), United States of America

Experts

Mr. Salah El Serafy
 Ms. Glenn Marie Lange, Columbia University
 Mr. Fulai Sheng, Conservation International