



# The System of Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA)

Workshop on Environment Statistics

Abuja, 19-23 May 2008

United Nations Statistics Division



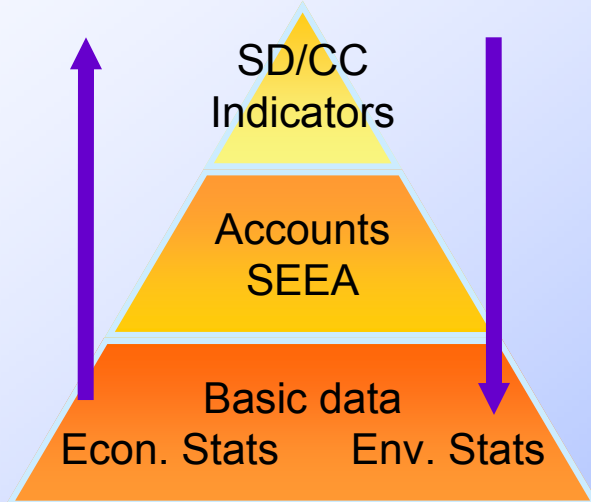
# What is the SEEA?

- Satellite system of the System of National Accounts (SNA) to better measure the interrelationship between the economy and the environment
- Allows presentation of environmental data and information, in physical and monetary terms, and economic variables in a common data framework



# Why an accounting approach?

policy  
relevance



interlinkages -  
underlying causes

Provides **added value**:

- Implicitly defines ownership and hence responsibility for environmental impacts
- Improves statistical quality by guaranteeing consistency (checks and balances)
- Provides policy-makers with coherent time series of data, indicators and descriptive statistics for scenario modeling



# SEEA

- Integration framework that measures interaction between economy and environment
- Consistent with System of National Accounts (SNA)
  - Common classifications (ISIC, CPC)
  - Common concepts (e.g. residence)
- Expands the analytical capacity of National Accounts
  - Enlarged asset boundary (e.g. ecosystems)
  - Includes complementary elements (e.g. physical information, etc.)
  - Elaborates aspects that are not explicitly identified in the accounts (e.g. ETS)
- Used to identify more sustainable paths of development (indicators and modeling)



# Brief history

- 1992: Agenda 21 called for “establishing systems for integrated environmental and economic accounting in all member States at the earliest date”
- SEEA-1993: satellite accounts
- SEEA-2003: major step forward towards harmonization however unresolved issues remain
- UN Statistical Commission therefore established the UN Committee of Experts in Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEAA) in 2005
- SEEA to become an international statistical standard by 2011



# Terminology

Terminology is not always consistent among economists, environmental statisticians, scientists and policy makers

=> Need to use a clear, agreed terminology

One of the SEEA main contribution is the standardization of terms and definitions



# Keys concepts of SEEA

	Stocks	Flows
Volume (e.g. tonnes, m <sup>3</sup> )		
Value (e.g. \$, £, ¥, €)		



# Specific accounts

- Water
- Energy
- Subsoil
- Land
- Ecosystems
- Forest/timber
- Emissions/Pollution
- Waste
- Environment Protection Expenditure
- Environmental Taxes and subsidies
- ‘Environment Industry’
- Material Flow





## Barriers to compiling environmental accounts

1. Availability of data (88%)
2. Quality of data (64%)
3. Lack of human resources (62%)
4. Lack of financial resources (55%)

Results of UN Global Assessment of Environmental accounting (42 respondents to question)



# Key lessons from countries implementing SEEA

Build on existing policies and programs

A phased approach is needed

- Start with topics/issues of most importance

Cooperation essential

- Within statistical offices
- Between government agencies
- With the research community
- Between users and producers

Regional forums are very useful for the exchange of information and experiences

While the SNA is a corner-stone of SEEA, environmental accounts can be done with only partial knowledge/experience of the SNA