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Items for discussion and decision: environmental accounting

Background document
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**Mandate and governance of the
United Nations Committee of Experts on
Environmental-Economic Accounting**

Prepared by the United Nations Committee of Experts on
Environmental-Economic Accounting

United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

Mandate and governance

A. Mandate

1. The mandate of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting encompasses environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics. “Supporting statistics” is intended to include relevant environment, energy and other statistics that support environmental-economic accounting.

2. 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.

3. 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.

B. Governance

4. The major elements of the governance arrangements are shown in the diagram below. The description of the governance follows the diagram and it covers the managerial functions, roles and responsibilities of the various groups and organizations involved. The boxes in the shaded large box represent the bodies of the Committee of Experts or projects under the Committee’s responsibility. The technical subgroups and city groups are presented outside the shaded box. These groups were established by bodies other than the Committee and have their own governance and reporting structure. Nevertheless, their programmes of work overlap with that of the Committee and, within its mandate, the Committee plays a coordination role as mandated by the Statistical Commission¹.

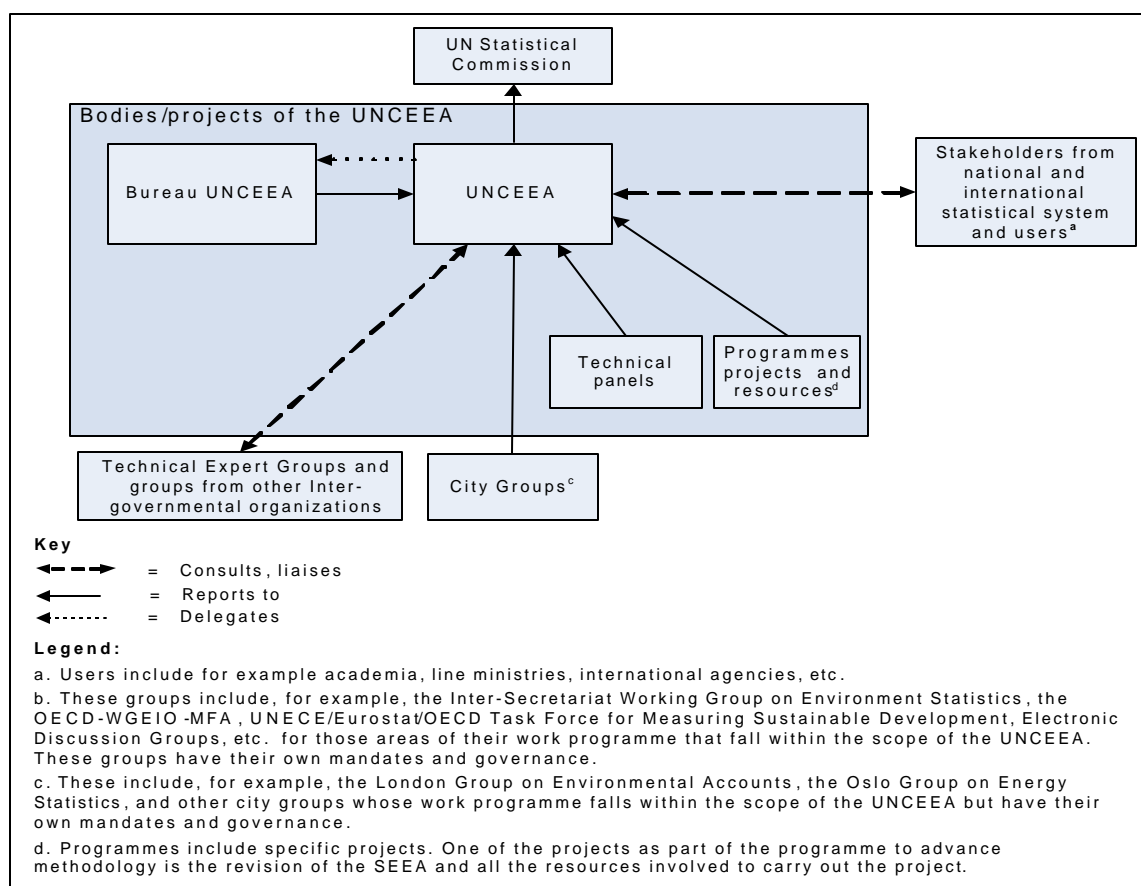
¹ See Statistical Commission Report on the thirty-seventh session (7 – 10 March 2006) Economic and Social Council Official Records 2006 Supplement N. 4 (E/2006/24 E/CN.3/2006/32).

5. The Bureau works under delegated authority from the Committee and was established to assist the Committee with the day-to-day management of its work programme. The Committee may convene technical panels when necessary to receive advice on substantive issues. The role and responsibilities of these bodies along with the others is discussed in further detail below.

1. *United Nations Statistical Commission*

6. The United Nations Statistical Commission is the entity that establishes the Committee and approves its mandate, work programme, governance and monitors its progress of work.

Governance structure of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting



2. *Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting*

7. The Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting carries out the mandate outlined in section A of this paper. The Committee is also responsible for reporting the progress of its programme of work to the Statistical Commission.

8. Within each area of its work programme, the Committee undertakes specific projects engaging existing city groups and/or other expert groups and establishing new groups as needed to carry out the work programme. For large projects, such as the revision of SEEA, it

may be necessary to develop project management frameworks for adoption by the Committee.

9. Broadly speaking, the Committee undertakes the following tasks in respect of the programmes under its responsibility:

- (a) Strategic planning, including providing strategic direction to the projects; ensuring their complementarity and proper coordination; and agreeing on their governance arrangements;
- (b) Programming and monitoring, including agreeing with the work plan, schedule, communication strategy and budget of the projects; assigning or negotiating tasks of the technical expert groups and groups from other intergovernmental organizations; tracking progress made by the projects and ensuring adequate and effective review of technical matters;
- (c) Reporting, including reporting to the Statistical Commission on the projects within its mandate; receiving regular reports from the technical groups; and liaising with stakeholders, managing their expectations and gaining their support;
- (d) Resource mobilization, including ensuring that projects are adequately resourced; raising funds as needed; recommending staffing for the projects; and monitoring cash and in-kind budgets.

10. High-level representation would be necessary to ensure the strategic role of the Committee in setting priorities, bringing forward a research agenda, taking decisions on standards and developing strategic visions.

11. Members of the Committee comprise high-level representatives from national governments and international organizations with a broad range of experience in statistics and accounts and their use. Also members would be selected so as to ensure equitable regional representation.

12. Given the wide range of topics covered by the Committee as well as the need to keep the Committee manageable in size to ensure in depth discussion, the Committee would comprise about 25 countries/organizations.

13. Members are appointed to the Committee for an initial period of three years, which may be renewed.

3. *Chair*

14. The Committee elects, among its members, the Chair for a period of three years renewable for one term. The role of the Chair would be to develop, in close cooperation with the secretariat, a multi-year and an annual work programme for the Committee, monitor progress of the various components of the programme and set the agenda for the meetings.

15. The Chair represents the Committee in international meetings and plays a key role in promoting and communicating the work of the statistical community with other communities, namely the scientific, academic, business and policymaking community. He or she engages the various stakeholders and seeks supports for the Committee projects.

4. *Bureau of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting*

16. The Bureau executes those tasks and activities in-between meetings for which it has received delegated authority from the Committee, including the oversight and day-to-day management of the projects under its responsibility. Decisions taken by the Bureau under the delegated authority from the Committee should be reported back to the Committee.

17. The Bureau, under delegated authority from the Committee, will carry out the activities and tasks in relation of strategic planning, programming and monitoring, reporting and resource mobilization for the projects within its mandate.

18. The Bureau of the Committee consists of members of the Committee at the senior level in national and international statistical offices. It includes the Chair, the secretariat, and senior officials from countries/international organizations endorsed by the Committee from among its members for a period of 3 years. The Chair may invite experts, chairs of the city and expert groups, to participate to the Bureau meetings.

5. *Secretariat*

19. The permanent secretariat of the Committee and its Bureau is UNSD. It is the main source of logistical and administrative support and receives guidance for this support from the Committee and its Bureau. Among the tasks that the secretariat undertakes are the following:

- (a) Circulate decisions to countries and/or regional and other expert meetings for discussion;
- (b) Manage the Committee's website;
- (c) Prepare the correspondence with the Statistical Commission members and national statistical offices;
- (d) Prepare reports to the Statistical Commission on behalf of the Committee and its Bureau;
- (e) Provide logistical and other support to the Committee and its Bureau.

6. *Technical panels*

20. The Committee of Experts could convene technical panels to support it in its deliberations on normative and methodological matters concerning environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics. They are bodies of the Committee and, as such, fall under its overall management and coordination.

21. The technical panels will consist of relevant experts in environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics appointed to be members by the Bureau of the Committee, with balanced regional representation taking into consideration. Technical panels will only be created where existing groups cannot provide the necessary technical support and will be chaired by one of the members of the Bureau. The technical panels will have limited life spans and focus on particular issues.

7. *City groups, technical expert groups and groups from inter-governmental organizations*

22. Existing city groups, technical expert groups and groups from inter-governmental organizations may be engaged to work on specific projects under the responsibility of the Committee. The Committee, while respecting the character and mandate of these groups, will coordinate, within its mandate, its programme of work with those groups working in environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics, as mandated by the Statistical Commission.

23. Specific tasks and responsibilities of these groups, including Inter-Secretariat Working Groups will be agreed between these groups and the Committee. The terms of reference for the tasks related to the projects will be formulated with every expert group. They will include specifications on deliverables, timelines and work arrangements for monitoring the technical discussions and for reporting recommendations to the Committee.