

United Nations Statistical Commission

Fifty-second session

1–3 and 5 March 2021

Item 3 (f) of the provisional agenda

Items for discussion and decision: environmental-economic accounting

Document E/CN.3/2021/10 – Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

Statement provided by:

Colombia on behalf of the Latin American countries of ECLAC

Statement:

Considering that our region has actively participated in discussions on environmental-economic accounting, we recognize that there are some challenges, so we highlight some specific issues regarding the evolution of the handbook.

(a) We are convinced that the adoption of Ecosystem Accounting as a statistical standard provides an opportunity for further development. The successful implementation of the accounts across countries will be ensured by a dynamic dialogue and research within the framework of the Statistical Commission, with the expert guidance from the UNCEEA.

(b) Due to the complexity of the SEEA-EA, which demands better representation of all ecosystems and biodiversity, a greater involvement from countries across the globe, will enrich the discussion and provide examples that serve as a guide and reference to a greater diversity of countries and users.

(c) It is also important to keep an ecosystem perspective in focus for all future work, to ensure that the complexities of ecosystems, biodiversity, and their contributions to the economy are always reflected appropriately and fairly. Although it is true that its measurement and incorporation into national accounts contributes to a better understanding at the economic level, it is essential to highlight the impacts from a cost perspective, beyond prices - of the degradation, fragmentation, or disappearance of the ecosystem. Along with monetization approaches that, if misfocused, can carry the risk of further environmental damage, and given the existing climate and biodiversity crises, the importance of conservation and care also needs to be reinforced.

d) The spatial / geospatial component is key in the valuation and accounting of ecosystems. Having integrated, complete, and up-to-date geospatial and Earth observations data is a critical requirement for estimating extent, condition, and supporting calculations and accounts. Therefore, we need to strengthen the construction and maintenance of databases from public, private, and international sources, through strategic alliances at the country, regional and global levels.

e) Likewise, we must bear in mind that neither the ecosystems nor the productive aspects are disconnected from social and cultural contexts, which must be considered all future analyses. As the review process shows, all future work must involve a permanent dialogue with a wide spectrum of stakeholders (producers, governments, academia, the private sector, civil society, and international organizations) to continually perfect concepts, methods and uses.

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f) In our region there are successful cases of implementation of the economic-environmental assessment. Even so, we are aware that using non-market values may raise questions of interpretation. However, we believe that valuation should be an integral part of the ecosystem accounts handbook, because it shows the importance of ecosystem services to the economy, and the productive impact that the quantity and quality of these services have on a variety of economic activities. Such is the case of agriculture, forestry, tourism, and food production, among others. Therefore, we applaud the decision to include in the revised manual Section D “Monetary Valuation and Integrated Accounting of Ecosystem Assets and Services” with the agreed specifications raised by the President.

We endorse the creation of a group of experts to monitor the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as proposed by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), supported by country representatives at UNCEEA. Moreover, we support the proposal to continue developing a methodology for ocean accounting (including the development of an SEEA Oceans), as well as regarding the creation of a working group on business accounting and the SEEA. We believe that significant results can be obtained for environmental accounting in issues such as water, biodiversity, ecosystem services, environmental gains, and losses, as well as in terms of “green” investment. These multi-stakeholder dialogues and understandings can also benefit the global discussion on data stewardship and use.

We are convinced that having a unified position strengthens an integrated vision on this issue and triggers several processes of great importance and benefit for the adoption and implementation of the SEEA framework and ecosystem accounts in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that need to develop technical or institutional capacities in the matter. In this regard, we hope to share progress and good practices between countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, as well as with other regions. The Statistical Conference of the Americas, and specifically its Working Group on Environmental Statistics, with the support of ECLAC, provides an ideal forum to define appropriate capacity-building mechanisms, including South-South cooperation, to assist all countries to further address SEEA implementation challenges, including ecosystem accounting. It also broadens the potential to raise and mobilize resources towards projects and programs for training, and technical and institutional strengthening, which can be coordinated by the SCA and ECLAC.

Submitted on:

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