

**3 February 2022**, 15:00 – 16:30 Eastern

Session on “Pathways for a resilient and inclusive economic recovery”- 4 minutes for their initial intervention, with a concluding intervention (1-2 minutes) at the end of the panel to share a key message or respond to any questions or comments by Member States.

## **Contribution by the Vice-Chair of the Statistical Commission,**

### **Ms. Gabriella Vukovich (Hungary)**

“The Statistical Commission adopted the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting – Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA). This is a significant step towards going beyond GDP and ensuring natural capital is also recognized in economic reporting. Could you please elaborate on the implications of this framework and how it would support building more resilient systems and achieving the SDGs?”

**Dear Mr. Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council,**

**Ambassadors, distinguished colleagues,**

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Economic and Social Council’s Coordination Segment in my capacity as Vice-Chairperson of the Statistical Commission.

In the last session of the Statistical Commission, we adopted the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting – Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA). The SEEA EA is an integrated framework on the environment-economy nexus that supports a wide range of SDGs and allows data users to go beyond GDP. SEEA EA organizes data about habitats and landscapes, measuring the ecosystem services, tracking changes in ecosystem assets, and linking this information to economic and other human activity.

The SEEA EA complements GDP by accounting for natural capital. By accounting for natural capital, we can understand the immense contributions of nature to our prosperity and well-being, and the importance of nature to our economic recovery.

The SEEA EA is built on five core accounts.

- 1. Ecosystem extent** accounts record the **total area** of each ecosystem.
- 2. Ecosystem condition** accounts record the condition of ecosystem assets in terms of selected characteristics.
- 3. & 4. Ecosystem services flow accounts** (*physical* and *monetary*, the latter is still work in progress) record the supply of ecosystem services by ecosystem assets and the use of those services by economic units, including households.
- 5. Monetary ecosystem asset** accounts record information on stocks and changes in stocks of ecosystem assets.

The SEEA EA also supports ‘thematic accounting’, which organizes data around specific policy-relevant environmental themes, such as biodiversity, climate change, oceans and urban areas.

Over 35 countries compile SEEA Ecosystem Accounts, and the number is expected to grow much larger in the coming years. In the Secretary General’s report “Our Common Agenda”, he explicitly urges Member States and others “to already begin implementation of the recent SEEA Ecosystem Accounting” as part of a pathway for national and global accounting systems to use official statistics to go beyond GDP.

In addition, the SEEA EA provides a statistical standard that underpins several international initiatives. As the SEEA EA allows for integrated analysis, it is expected to feature heavily in the monitoring framework of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (<https://www.cbd.int/article/draft-1-global-biodiversity-framework>) and contributes to the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration (<https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/>), in addition to the SDGs.

Several SDG Goals (**6.** clean water and sanitation, **11.** sustainable cities and communities; and **15.** life on land) are associated with indicators derived directly from SEEA EA. However, in addition, knowledge of the services provided by ecosystems and their condition is essential to reach targets of goals such as **1.** no poverty, **2.** zero hunger, **7.** affordable and clean energy, **12.** responsible consumption and production.

SEEA EA is a classic example of the innovative use of statistics and emphasizes the need for robust statistical and data systems. SEEA EA requires the integration of data from various sources, including the integration of geospatial information and

statistical information. This is one of the examples of addressing the information needs on cross-cutting issues with the innovative approaches.

Investment in statistical and data systems to provide baseline data to make policy recommendations and evidence-based decisions is essential for such integrated systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put enormous strain on national statistical offices across all policy domains. It also emphasized that greater resources and advocacy is needed for SEEA implementation. Moreover, implementation of cross-cutting frameworks such as the SEEA EA, requires extensive coordination and collaboration with line ministries and other data providers, which has been difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic. Greater interinstitutional collaboration and partnerships will therefore be key to creating effective policies for a resilient and inclusive economic recovery.

Data and information support building more resilient systems and achieving the SDGs. More investment in data, both in technical and human capacity and resources is needed **by** member states and **for** Member States.

Last year, the Statistical Commission tasked the Bureau with reviewing and updating its terms of reference through an open, participatory process. The revision process fits into the review ECOSOC is conducting of its subsidiary bodies. By reviewing and updating the terms of reference, the Statistical Commission can better address and support the current and future statistical and data needs faced by Member states to build more resilient systems and get back on track to achieve the SDGs.

#### Key Message for the wrap-up

- Continued need to invest in statistical and data systems for countries for evidence-based policy decisions and recovery
- Greater interinstitutional collaboration and partnerships will be key to creating effective policies for a resilient and inclusive economic recovery.