International context on SEEA Ecosystem Accounting Implementation

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Growing interest in Natural Capital Accounting

“this new statistical framework moves beyond GDP and takes better account of biodiversity and ecosystems in national economic planning” – Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the European Commission

“a historic step towards transforming the way how we view and value nature” – António Guterres, UN Secretary General

“Committed to further mainstreaming biodiversity in decision-making, we will ensure implementation of the System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA), ... a regular and institutionalised compilation of accounts, will use related indicators for policy and decision-making, and provide international support for further development and implementation of SEEA-EA” - The G7 climate, energy and environment ministers – Communique 27 May 2022

Last July, the UN published a global indicator review researchers confirmed that countries could use SEEA to report 34 of the 147 Aichi target indicators and 21 of the 230 SDG target indicators. This is an important start, but also indicates how much needs to be done before more goals and targets can be reported using the SEEA framework — an opportunity which researchers must not pass up.
Economic activities depend on interaction with natural capital.

Benefits included in market prices:
- Natural Capital (natural resources & ecosystems)
- Economic Activity (production & consumption of goods and services)

Benefits not included in market prices (e.g., erosion control):
- Positive: sustainable tourism
- Negative: deforestation

Benefits of ecosystem goods & services:
- Positive & negative impacts

Diagram elements:
- Natural Capital: trees, grass
- Economic Activity: cityscape
- Arrows indicate the interaction and flow of benefits.
Standardisation of measurement of the environment

- SEEA Central Framework adopted as statistical standard through an intergovernmental process in 2013
- SEEA Ecosystem Accounting adopted in March 2021
- SEEA developed in close collaboration with numerous stakeholders, including:
  - CBD, UNCCD
  - IPBES, IUCN
  - Capitals Coalition and private sector (most recently TNFD)
  - Wealth accounting efforts (World Bank; UNEP)
- SEEA status of implementation 2020:
  - 89 countries implementing the SEEA Central Framework
  - 34 countries compiling SEEA Ecosystem Accounts
  - 27 countries planning to start implementation of the SEEA
- UN SG in his Common Agenda calls for SEEA EA implementation in all countries
The SEEA supports multiple ongoing initiatives
SEEA EA Global Implementation Strategy

**Overall objective:** scale up the uptake of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting

**Suggested target:** at least 60 countries implement at least one account of the SEEA EA by 2025

**Specific objectives:**

- Regular production of selected ecosystem accounts, starting from ecosystem extent accounts to ecosystem condition and ecosystem services in physical and monetary terms;

- Mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystems into (sub)national policies;

- Use of the SEEA EA for monitoring and reporting in particular
  - In National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs),
  - Voluntary National Reports that present country progress towards achieving the SDGs,
  - National Determined Contributions (NDCs) that present country progress towards climate targets and highlight the government actions and policies to combat climate change;

- Dissemination of ecosystem accounts through global data sets
Approach and main principles

- Multi-stakeholder engagement
- Flexible and modular approach
- Tiered implementation
- (Sub)regional approach
- South-south cooperation
Activities in support of the implementation

- **Capacity building**
- **Development of guidelines and material to support compilation**
- **Strengthening collaboration**
- **Data and tools**
- **Communication and advocacy**
ARIES for SEEA

• How?
  > Developed as part of NCAVES project (EU funded; UNSD and UNEP) by BC3 building on existing ARIES platform
  > Linked to UN Global Platform on Big Data for Official Statistics

• Beta version launched in April 2021 – continuously expanded

• Why?
  > Need for a computational platform
  > Lowering barriers to compiling ecosystem accounts for countries
  > Make it easier to collaborate (share data and develop models)
  > Facilitate deriving indicators (using solid basis in accounts)
Other relevant statistical developments

• SNA update (2025)
  > Greater alignment with SEEA (e.g. depletion;)

• Beyond GDP (as part of UN Common Agenda)

• Revision of classifications (ISIC/CPC/COFOG)
  > Better visibility of nature / environment

• Data Gaps Initiative (IMF+FSB)
  > Recommendations on climate Change for G20

• Private sector development on NCA
  > Task-force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures
  > International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB)
THANK YOU
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