

**HIGH LEVEL PANEL**  
**TAKING THE ENVIRONMENT INTO ACCOUNT**  
**MONDAY, 2 MARCH 2020**  
**10:00AM – 1:00PM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 4**

*Meeting organized by the United Nations Committee of Experts on  
Environmental Economic Accounting*

For far too long, traditional economic policies have dominated the policy landscape. These policies have failed to go ‘beyond GDP’, instead ignoring the environmental consequences of economic growth. This is done at great peril, as how we treat the environment will determine our future. Instead, sustainable development requires an integrated approach to the economy and environment. This is recognized in several international initiatives and approaches, including the 2030 Agenda, post-2020 global biodiversity framework, Paris Agreement, ‘beyond GDP’ movement and the multiple capitals approach.

The System for Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), is an integrated statistical framework that brings together disparate economic and environmental data to provide a systems approach for understanding the environment-economy nexus. The SEEA has been gaining rapid traction over the past several years, particularly the SEEA-Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA-EEA). The SEEA-EEA integrates information on the economy and ecosystems and utilizes a spatially explicit approach that combines statistical data with earth observation. By accounting for the essential services provided by biodiverse, healthy ecosystems to society, the SEEA EEA enables the development of policies which maintain and restore ecosystems and biodiversity.

Over the past several years, there has been overwhelming demand for information derived from the SEEA-EEA. As a response, the SEEA EEA is currently being revised, with the objective of developing agreed methodologies to measure ecosystems and their contribution to the economy and more broadly to wellbeing. It will be brought to the UN Statistical Commission in 2021. The revised framework will contain a comprehensive set of accounts that describe natural capital in terms of the extent and condition of ecosystems and the supply of essential services that they provide to society. The revision

process is truly an inclusive process involving experts from different communities, including scientists, environmental economists, earth observation experts, statisticians and national accountants.

Some of the main drivers of the progress of the SEEA-EEA include technological advances and increasing data availability due to advances in the resolution and timeliness of big data sources, such as earth observation data. In parallel, recent years have seen exciting developments in modelling capabilities, including artificial intelligence-based platforms and machine learning techniques, which bring a suite of novel data sources within reach of national statistical offices (NSOs).

This High Level Panel will take stock of the progress made on the SEEA-EEA, discuss how the accounts can be developed using big data, explore how the accounts can be used to mainstream natural capital into the policy debate, and discuss how the SEEA has helped shift the role of NSOs from data compilers towards data custodians.

## AGENDA

**Moderator:** Bert Kroese, Deputy Director General CBS the Netherlands and Chair Committee of Experts on Environmental Economic Accounting

**Setting the scene – Advances in the SEEA EEA revision and experience in the Netherlands (Bert Kroese)**

### **Panel 1 – Demand for the SEEA NCA in context of global and national policy demands**

Panelists will illustrate the increasing policy demands for the SEEA in their respective organizations.

- Stefan Schweinfest, Director, United Nations Statistics Division
- Mariana Kotzeva, Director General, Eurostat
- Mark Sowden, Government Statistician, New Zealand
- Risenga Maluleke, Statistician General and Head of Statistics South Africa
- Louis Marc Ducharme, Director Statistics Department, International Monetary Fund

### **Technological advances – Big data to support the compilation of the SEEA EEA**

Presentation of ARIES (Artificial Intelligence for Ecosystem Services) and the US experience in compiling ecosystem accounts (Kenneth Bagstad, Research Economist USGS)

### **Panel 2 – Country experiences in the SEEA EEA**

Panelists will share their experience and results in developing the SEEA EEA in their countries and illustrate the role of NSOs in the compilation of the accounts working together with different governmental and non-governmental agencies in the government. It will also show the use of big data in the compilation of ecosystem accounts.

- Pravin Srivastava, Chief Statistician of India
- Chris Mukiza, Chief Statistician, Uganda Bureau of Statistics
- Enrique Ordaz Lopez, Vice President National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), Mexico
- Greg Peterson, Assistant Chief Statistician, Statistics Canada