



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Statistics**Seventh session**

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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda**

**Seminar on priority issues: accounting for integrated statistics
and analysis****Regional and national efforts with economic, satellite and
environmental accounts in Asia and the Pacific****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The present document contains information on economic, environmental and tourism satellite accounts and relevant global and regional mechanisms to advance accounting in national statistical systems, as well as lessons learned from regional cooperation mechanisms and opportunities for regional action to advance accounting.

The Committee on Statistics may wish to discuss how regional collaboration on accounts may support and strengthen national efforts and how accounts may feature in its future work.

I. Introduction

1. Asia and the Pacific has two overarching commitments for advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a collective vision and framework for action by the Asia-Pacific statistical community,¹ endorsed by the Committee on Statistics at its fifth session, in 2016, and the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind,² endorsed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at its seventy-fifth session, in 2019.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 20 August 2020.

** ESCAP/CST/2020/L.1.

¹ E/ESCAP/CST(5)/1/Rev.1.

² ESCAP/75/4/Add.1.

2. The collective vision and framework for action is focused on strengthening statistical capacity to produce, disseminate and use official statistics through five action areas, while the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind is focused on bringing a whole-of-government perspective to statistics, which are indispensable for evidence-based decision-making and of principal value for transparency, accountability and inclusive societies.

3. The Bureau of the Committee has identified accounts, including national accounts, tourism satellite accounts and environmental-economic accounts, as an area of priority for discussion in Asia and the Pacific.

4. Accounts align well with all five action areas of the collective vision and framework for action, in particular action area C on integrated statistics for integrated analysis. Accounts can engage users and lead to investment in statistics (action area A), assure quality and instil trust in statistics (action area B), modernize statistical business processes (action area D) and develop requisite skills set (action area E).

5. Accounts also align well with the Declaration. The use and production of accounts require a strong national statistical system and whole-of-government support and engagement. This whole-of-government approach is necessary because the national statistical office in some countries is not the main producer of accounts and has to collaborate with other entities. Even in countries where the national statistical office is the main producer, accounts draw on data and expertise from multiple ministries and communities. In addition, accounts are highly relevant to policy, and many policymakers are literate with regard to statistics when it comes to accounting concepts such as supply, demand and balance sheets.

6. The present document contains information on economic, environmental and tourism satellite accounts and relevant global and regional mechanisms as well as opportunities to further advance accounting in Asia and the Pacific.

II. National accounts

7. National accounts are a coherent, consistent and integrated set of macroeconomic accounts, balance sheets and tables based on a set of internationally agreed concepts, definitions, classifications and accounting rules. Collectively, they constitute a comprehensive framework within which economic data can be compiled and presented.

8. National accounts provide an overview of economic processes, recording how production and income are distributed among consumers, businesses, Governments and the rest of the world. For example, they show how income is generated by production and modified by taxes and transfers, how it flows to these groups and how they allocate the flows to consumption, savings and investment.³ The balance sheets embedded in national accounts present the financial and non-financial assets of a country and are therefore critical in the assessment of wealth. Consequently, national accounts form a powerful basis for the analysis of the economy, wealth and distribution of wealth for policy formulation.

³ Additional information is available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/sna.asp>.

A. Regional initiatives: Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific and work of the secretariat

9. Since 2010, the Asia-Pacific region has worked towards a shared ambition for economic statistics, namely to ensure that by 2020, all countries have the capacity to produce a basic range of economic statistics defined by the core set of economic statistics, which the Commission endorsed at its sixty-seventh session, held in 2011.⁴ The core set comprises economic indicators considered foundational, including for national accounts compilation (see annex II).

10. Activities to achieve the shared ambition are guided by the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. As a platform for coordination, the Regional Programme also facilitates the pooling of resources and sharing of experiences among countries and development partners. Initially planned until 2020, the Regional Programme, on the recommendation of the Committee, has been extended to 2030 and aligned with the collective vision and framework for action.

11. The implementation of the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific is overseen by its Steering Group, comprising 23 countries from all ESCAP subregions as well as four development partners (see annex I). By identifying short-term and long-term priorities and providing strategic and technical advice to the secretariat, the Steering Group has been a key element in the success of the Regional Programme. The Steering Group has also been instrumental in the organization of the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Statistics Week, renamed in 2020 as the Asia-Pacific Statistics Week, and has contributed to global statistical initiatives such as the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and its Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts.

12. The Steering Group conducts its work electronically and at annual meetings. Task forces have been created to solve specific issues. These task forces were especially successful when focused on time-limited tangible outputs, such as the organization of the Asia-Pacific Statistics Week or periodic capacity screenings to monitor results of the Regional Programme.⁵ However, they were less successful when focused on broader issues without specific, time-limited deliverables such as quality assurance and statistical business registers.

13. To measure progress in the implementation of the Regional Programme and assess national capacity to produce the core set of economic statistics, two capacity screenings were conducted. The results of the most recent assessment, conducted in 2017, showed that all items in the core set of economic statistics had been produced in nearly all countries with a population of more than one million people.⁶

14. Gross domestic product was found to be one of the most commonly produced statistics, but natural resource and environment statistics were produced in only 34 per cent of countries. Productivity, institutional sector accounts and natural resource and environment statistics are arguably the three most complex and difficult-to-produce items in the core set. The accurate calculation of productivity statistics and institutional sector accounts require

⁴ Commission resolution 67/10.

⁵ For more information on the work of the task force on the Asia-Pacific Statistics Week, see ESCAP/CST/2020/2.

⁶ ESCAP/CST/2018/INF/4.

detailed company-level data, while natural resource and environment statistics require collaboration among several institutions and are subject to new and evolving statistical standards such as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA). Moreover, the lower rate of adoption of the core set in countries or areas with small populations was explained by the lack of relevance of some items and the low number of people working in the national statistical systems, which suggests that additional technical assistance might not result in the full delivery of the core set, even in the longer term.

15. In summary, the goal of national production and dissemination of a basic range of economic statistics in all countries by 2020 was broadly achieved in 2017, and this achievement underscores the success of the Regional Programme in strengthening foundational economic statistics at the national level. Nonetheless, although not the focus of the 2017 assessment, issues pertaining to data quality were indicated by the assessment, raising the importance of focusing on this matter going forward.

16. Priority areas for the Regional Programme until 2030 will be discussed at the 9th meeting of the Steering Group, to be held in June 2020.⁷

17. The Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific offers a common strategy to guide both national statistical systems and development partners on the improvement of economic statistics in the region. As the custodian of the Regional Programme, the secretariat plays a coordinating role under the leadership of the Steering Group and strives to create visibility and momentum for economic statistics through the organization of forums, such as the Asia-Pacific Statistics Week, where national experts share research and experiences.

18. In that regard, the secretariat has designed projects and raised funds for Regional Programme activities and in-country support for least developed and developing countries in South Asia and South-East Asia. In-country support has been focused on skills and infrastructure to produce and disseminate the core set of economic statistics.⁸

B. Global initiatives

1. Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts

19. At the global level, Governments participate in the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, which assists the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts in resolving issues on the research agenda of the System of National Accounts and guiding its implementation programme. The Advisory Expert Group meets every year. The minimum period for which a member is invited to serve on the Advisory Expert Group is 3 years.

20. There are currently five Asia-Pacific members of the Advisory Expert Group, from Australia, Indonesia, Japan, the Russian Federation and Singapore (see annex I). All are representatives of the national statistical offices except for the member from Japan, who is a representative of the Cabinet Office of the Economic and Social Research Institute. Only one developing country from Asia and the Pacific is represented. Moreover, there is no representation from Pacific small island developing States, South Asia, Central Asia or the Caucasus.

⁷ ESCAP/CST/2020/INF/4.

⁸ For more information on technical assistance provided by the secretariat, see ESCAP/CST/2020/2.

21. In 2020, the Statistical Commission at its fifty-first session endorsed the continuous revision of the System of National Accounts by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts and the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts. Revision efforts include the drafting of guidance notes on emerging research issues for experimentation by both developed and developing countries before a major update of the System of National Accounts. The Statistical Commission noted the interest of several Member States in participating in the experimentation and testing of the forthcoming guidance notes.⁹

2. Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics

22. In 2019, the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session established the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics for a duration of two years. The three Asia-Pacific members of the Friends of the Chair group, Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia, are representatives of the national statistical offices (see annex I). The group has several tasks, including to conduct an assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of governance of the current economic statistics system.

23. The deliberations of the group are informed by broad consultations using questionnaires and seminars. Written questionnaires were sent to various working groups operating in the domain of economic statistics under the Statistical Commission and under other mechanisms. However, the questionnaire was not distributed to the Steering Group for the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific or other groups of the Committee, which illustrates a gap and an opportunity to increase collaboration, complementarity and interoperability of regional and global statistical groups for enhanced overall effectiveness.

24. Two regional consultation seminars were organized in Asia and the Pacific. The first was part of the high-level seminar on the future of economic statistics, held in Shanghai, China, from 3 to 5 June 2019.¹⁰ Participants, including from nine Asia-Pacific countries, concluded that there was a need to apply economic statistics in new areas such as the digital economy, use new data sources such as mobile phone data and disseminate data on smaller population groups or geographic regions using new visualization platforms.

25. The second consultation was part of the 2019 Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific management seminar on the future of economic statistics, held in Chiba, Japan, on 11 and 12 December.¹¹ Participants at the seminar discussed the conclusions of the first consultation and recommended actions at the global, regional and national levels. They recommended that regional organizations facilitate the sharing of knowledge generated at the global level and the documentation of country-level experiences in the region to inform global knowledge and standard-setting. They also agreed that collaboration between countries could and should increase to learn best practices and better understand new methods being tested in other countries.

⁹ *Official records of the Economic and Social Council, 2020, Supplement No. 4 (E/2020/24-E/CN.3/2020/37)*, chap. I, sect. C, decision 51/106.

¹⁰ Information on the high-level seminar is available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/events/2019/Shanghai/default.asp>.

¹¹ Information on the management seminar is available at www.unsiap.or.jp/programmes/ms_materials/ms14.html.

26. Participants at both consultation seminars recommended moving beyond macroeconomic statistics to areas such as distributional national accounts and SEEA, with a focus on physical and monetary measurements and on disaggregated and local-level statistics.

27. A summary of the consultations and a work programme for the second and final year of existence of the Friends of the Chair group were presented to the Statistical Commission at its fifty-first session. The group decided to focus on improving the current system of economic statistics rather than recommending major changes to it. The work programme, approved by the Statistical Commission, covers four dimensions:

(a) Documenting the operations of the current system of statistical groups and proposed future operations;

(b) Improving connections between statistical groups by establishing networks;

(c) Challenging statistical groups to operate in new ways, with a focus on experimentation and capacity-building;

(d) Increasing engagement with a broad range of users and other potential partners to determine global priorities for the updated system of economic statistics, such as those related to globalization, digitization, well-being and sustainability, the informal economy and human capital.¹²

28. The Statistical Commission requested the Friends of the Chair group to further consider the need for a responsive, comprehensive and harmonized system of economic statistics, encompassing macroeconomic accounts, statistical business registers, international classifications and granular data from household, business and trade statistics. It also requested existing statistical groups to collaborate with the group to review their governance and working methods and to trial and explore the benefits of new action-oriented networking methods. It further requested the group to challenge existing statistical groups with a limited number of short-term projects, building on the needs of developed and developing countries to support the update of the system of economic statistics.

29. Several members of the Committee are also members of the Conference of European Statisticians. They will have the opportunity to further discuss the impacts of globalization and digitization on economic statistics at the sixty-eighth plenary session of the Conference, to be held from 22 to 24 June 2020, and to influence the global agenda for the future of economic statistics.¹³ It is expected that the Conference will identify concrete steps towards building a responsive economic statistics system that provides relevant information for policymakers.

III. Tourism satellite accounts

30. Satellite accounts provide detailed descriptions of economic functions or themes, including their interaction with and impact on the economy at large. Examples include satellite accounts for education and training, health, tourism, transport, aviation, the non-profit sector, the ocean economy and culture.

¹² *Official records of the Economic and Social Council, 2020, Supplement No. 4 (E/2020/24-E/CN.3/2020/37)*, chap. I, sect. C, decision 51/105.

¹³ Information on the sixty-eighth plenary session is available at www.unece.org/index.php?id=53381.

31. According to a draft guide on thematic satellite accounts prepared for the 13th meeting of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, held in October 2019,¹⁴ there is a growing demand for compiling satellite accounts. A major strength of such accounts is that they are fully embedded in the traditional set of national accounts data, which makes it possible to analyse the impact of certain theme-related policies on areas including economic growth, employment, government debt and deficit, and foreign trade. This strength has increased the demand for the compilation of these accounts, which have become so popular that their set-up and continuation cannot be taken up by the national accounts community as part of the regular compilation of a continuously growing set of national accounts requirements. This situation points to resource gaps in national statistical offices, demand for additional guidance and reference materials and a need for improved collaboration within national statistical systems, as advocated in the collective vision and framework for action.

32. The purpose of a tourism satellite account is to enable the detailed analysis of all aspects of demand for goods and services associated with the activity of visitors; to observe the operational interface with the supply of such goods and services within the economy; and to describe how this supply interacts with other economic activities. Tourism satellite accounts permit greater consistency of national tourism statistics with the rest of a given national statistical system and increased international comparability of these data. Multiple member States have compiled tourism satellite accounts, including Australia; Brunei Darussalam; China; Fiji; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Malaysia; New Zealand; the Republic of Korea; Thailand; and Viet Nam. The impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on tourism has made tourism satellite accounts even more relevant and underlined the need for greater collaboration and timely data from the stakeholders involved in the production of these accounts.

A. Regional initiatives

33. Tourism satellite accounts have been identified as a priority area of statistical development in the implementation of the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. In that regard, the secretariat is collaborating with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to provide support on the emerging methodological framework for tourism satellite accounts and measures of sustainable tourism.¹⁵

34. The ocean economy and related tourism is another thematic area of interest in Asia and the Pacific. Promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation on oceans for sustainable development was the theme of the seventy-sixth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held on 21 May 2020. Leading up to the session, the secretariat supported member States in the development of statistical capacities for effective and inclusive decisions about the oceans as part of its work on ocean accounts. Of the five pilot studies on ocean accounts facilitated by the secretariat, the studies in Samoa, Thailand and Viet Nam were centred on promoting sustainable tourism by linking tourism income, natural resource use, land-based pollution and ecosystem impact, and thus directly supported the development and use of tourism satellite accounts.¹⁶

¹⁴ See <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/aeg/2019/M13.asp>.

¹⁵ For more information on the support provided to countries, see ESCAP/CST/2020/2.

¹⁶ For more information on the work of the secretariat on ocean accounts, see ESCAP/76/24.

B. Global initiatives: measuring the sustainability of tourism

35. In collaboration with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, UNWTO has launched the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism to provide all countries in the world with a common framework to measure the impacts and dependencies of tourism on the economy, society and the environment. Sustainability in tourism, and by extension its measurement, naturally cuts across a range of disciplines and entities. For this reason, UNWTO, at the request of its Committee on Statistics, set up a multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder working group of experts to lead the development of the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism. The Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism engages experts from national statistical offices, national tourism authorities, subnational tourism authorities and observatories, international organizations, academia and the private sector. A total of 24 countries are represented on the Working Group of Experts, including four from the Asia-Pacific region: Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines (see annex I).

36. The primary task of the Working Group of Experts has been to develop the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism. A central but not exclusive feature of the statistical framework is the linking of the two established United Nations statistical standards: the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 and SEEA.

37. Some member States have participated in or are currently participating in pilot studies for the implementation of the statistical framework, including the Philippines. The pilot studies serve two main purposes: to test the relevance and feasibility of the statistical framework and to contribute to its ongoing development with lessons learned and novel or pragmatic on-the-ground solutions. In that regard, UNWTO has reached out to Governments to initiate additional pilot studies, including those piloting ocean accounts with a focus on sustainable tourism (Samoa, Thailand and Viet Nam). The next steps in the process include the development of global and regional implementation plans, a task in which a subgroup of the Working Group of Experts has been actively engaged under the leadership of Canada.

38. The statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism is currently undergoing revision, with a global consultation planned for 2020 to engage with and seek views from the tourism and statistical communities and beyond. The recommendations issuing from the global consultation will be considered by the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting.

IV. Environmental-economic accounts

39. Environmental accounts emerged in the 1990s as an important area of statistical development. Environmental accounts bring together economic and environmental information in a common framework to measure the contribution of the environment to the economy and the impact of the economy on the environment. They offer a means of monitoring the pressures exerted by the economy on the environment and of exploring how these might be abated.

40. Environmental accounts organize environmental data from many domains using the same concepts and terminology as the national accounts. Thus, they show the interaction between economic, household and environmental factors and are consequently more informative than national accounts alone.

41. Environmental accounts can be used to answer a number of questions. For example, which industry is emitting most greenhouse gases? How do patterns of consumption and production affect the environment? What is the effect of economic policy measures, such as an environmental tax on the generation of waste or air emissions? How fast is the environmental economy growing and how does it compare with the rest of the economy?

42. In that connection, SEEA is the international standard for environmental-economic accounting, providing a framework for organizing and presenting statistics on the environment and its relationship with the economy. It brings together economic and environmental information in an internationally agreed set of standard concepts, definitions, classifications, accounting rules and tables to produce internationally comparable statistics. It consists of three parts: the SEEA Central Framework,¹⁷ which was adopted by the Statistical Commission in 2012 as the first international standard for environmental-economic accounting; SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, which offers a synthesis of current knowledge in ecosystem accounting; and SEEA Applications and Extensions, which illustrate to compilers and users of accounts based on the SEEA Central Framework how the information can be used in decision-making, policy review and formulation, analysis and research. These accounts are being compiled in an increasing number of countries, including many in Asia and the Pacific.¹⁸

A. Regional initiatives

1. Accounting for the oceans

43. Following a request by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its seventy-third session to support and develop regional partnerships for enhancing data and statistical capacities for Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life below water)¹⁹ and a request by the Statistical Commission at its forty-ninth session to integrate ocean statistics into the work of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting revision process,²⁰ the secretariat collaborated with the University of New South Wales to establish the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership as an international coordination and communication structure for the development, maintenance and ongoing use in decision-making of ocean accounts. As of December 2019, the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership had eight formal members, including four from Asia and the Pacific: Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security; ESCAP; Institute of Strategy and Policy on Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam; and University of New South Wales, Australia.

44. One of the early achievements of the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership was the development of a draft technical guidance on ocean accounting for sustainable development for preliminary consultation purposes. The draft technical guidance includes a description of a statistical framework for compiling ocean-related data, statistics and indicators in a spatially consistent,

¹⁷ *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting 2012: Central Framework* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.12.XVII.12).

¹⁸ See background document on the Global Assessment of Environmental-Economic Accounting and Supporting Statistics 2017, prepared for the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission. Available at <https://seea.un.org/content/global-assessment-environmental-economic-accounting>.

¹⁹ Commission resolution 73/5.

²⁰ *Official records of the Economic and Social Council, 2018, Supplement No. 4* (E/2018/24-E/CN.3/2018/37), chap. I, sect. B, decision 49/110.

comparable and coherent manner.²¹ The draft technical guidance was submitted to the Statistical Commission at its fifty-first session, at which the Commission recognized it as a solid foundation for integrating ocean accounts into the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting revision process.²² As a follow-up measure to the Commission's deliberations, a dedicated ocean accounting group, to be led by the United Nations Environment Programme, is being formed to take part in the revision process.

45. In 2019, the secretariat provided technical assistance to member States in all five Asia-Pacific subregions on the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework. The assistance included support for data and statistics on Sustainable Development Goal 14 in the context of the above-mentioned pilot studies on ocean accounts in China, Malaysia, Samoa, Thailand and Viet Nam.

2. Disaster-related Statistics Framework

46. The Asia-Pacific region has spearheaded global work on disaster-related statistics. In response to a request by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,²³ the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific was established in 2014 with the main objective of developing a basic range of disaster-related statistics in support of policy development. The work conducted by experts from the region led to the development of the Disaster-related Statistics Framework, finalized in 2018.²⁴ In addition to providing Asia-Pacific countries with guidance on the compilation of disaster-related statistics, the initiative inspired and informed efforts in Europe and in Latin America and the Caribbean, coordinated by the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively.

47. The Disaster-related Statistics Framework is now used as a basis for the work of a new global group on disaster-related statistics co-chaired by ESCAP and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. The successful experience illustrates the ability of Asia and the Pacific to take a global leadership role in the development of new methodologies.

3. Land cover and geospatial information

48. The integration of geospatial and statistical data is an area of increasing interest in the region. However, capacity gaps, notably with regard to the use of software, slow down or even prevent some national statistical offices from entering this space. To support member States in strengthening their institutional capacity to integrate these two types of data, the secretariat is developing step-by-step guidance materials for analysing land cover change, population density and other relevant social and demographic characteristics for the assessment of sources of pollution and exposure to hazards.²⁵ In parallel, the secretariat has initiated technical assistance on the production of land accounts using geospatial information. Lastly, the secretariat has recently enhanced its engagement with the work of various expert groups of the Committee of Experts on Global

²¹ For more information on the work of the secretariat with regard to ocean accounts, see ESCAP/CST/2020/2.

²² See *Official records of the Economic and Social Council, 2020, Supplement No. 4 (E/2020/24-E/CN.3/2020/37)*.

²³ See Commission resolution 70/2.

²⁴ For information on the recent work of the secretariat with regard to the Disaster-related Statistics Framework, see ESCAP/76/5.

²⁵ For more information on the work of the secretariat with regard to land accounts, see ESCAP/CST/2020/2.

Geospatial Information Management for the region to contribute to and benefit from global efforts.

B. Global initiatives

49. Several international institutions and bodies work in environmental-economic accounting, helping to advance and implement SEEA globally. Two prominent groups are the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting and the London Group on Environmental Accounting. Owing to the importance of geospatial information for producing environmental-economic accounts, the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information of the Global Geospatial Information Management and the task team on satellite imagery and geospatial data of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics are also highly relevant to the increased adoption of SEEA.

1. Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting

50. The Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting was established by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session, held in March 2005. The Committee of Experts, which meets annually in New York and is governed by a Bureau, provides vision, coordination, prioritization and direction in the field of environmental-economic accounting and supporting statistics. The Committee's efforts fall into six work streams led by Governments or international agencies.

51. Among the 27 current member countries of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, 10 are from Asia and the Pacific (Australia, Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Russian Federation and Samoa), representing all ESCAP subregions (see annex I). The number of Asia-Pacific members of the Committee of Experts is double that of the Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts. All members are representatives of the national statistical offices. Australia, India and the Philippines are also members of the Bureau of the Committee.

52. The Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting is currently overseeing the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting revision and has initiated discussion on a revision of the SEEA Central Framework for possible finalization by 2025.

53. The Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting is also working towards the development of global data sets for four identified priority accounts, namely energy, air emission, material flow and land accounts. It will develop data templates and start data collection and compilation for selected accounts shortly. In parallel, as part of the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project, which is funded by the European Union and being piloted in China and India, the Committee of Experts is developing a tool for Governments to use national data combined with Earth observation data to compile ecosystem extent accounts, ecosystem condition accounts and selected ecosystem services.

54. At its fifty-first session, the Statistical Commission expressed appreciation for the inclusive and transparent SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting revision process and noted the high demand and interest from statistical, scientific and policy communities. The Commission also emphasized the urgency of providing a standardized methodology for ecosystem accounting that reflects the revision and reinforces the role of national statistical offices as data stewards, and supported the aspiration to elevate the revised SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting to SEEA Ecosystem Accounting.

55. In 2020, the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting will conduct a global assessment of the implementation of the SEEA Central Framework and SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting to provide data for indicator 9.1 (b) of Sustainable Development Goal 15, on the integration of biodiversity into national accounting and reporting systems, defined as the implementation of SEEA.

2. London Group on Environmental Accounting

56. The London Group on Environmental Accounting was created in 1993 as a forum to advance methodological research and develop SEEA implementation advice. The London Group holds annual meetings which allow practitioners to share their experience of developing and implementing SEEA. The Asia-Pacific region is represented by experts from eight countries (Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea). At least one of the experts from each of those countries is a representative of the national statistical office, except Japan, which is represented by its Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (see annex I). South and South-West Asia, North and Central Asia and the Pacific small island developing States are not represented in the London Group.

3. Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information

57. The Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, is a subsidiary body of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management that comprises representatives of both statistical and geospatial communities and has developed the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework for the integration of statistical and geospatial information.²⁶ The work of the Expert Group is highly useful in enhancing the implementation of SEEA. Action on certain environmental-economic accounts, for example land accounts, requires specific skills to integrate geospatial information about land with statistical information such as land valuation. The Expert Group provides a mechanism for improving national capacity to integrate geospatial and statistical data and use it in the implementation of SEEA.

4. Task team on satellite imagery and geospatial data

58. The task team on satellite imagery and geospatial data of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics, chaired by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, provides strategic vision and direction on the use of satellite imagery and geospatial data for official statistics.²⁷ The task team contributes to SEEA implementation by exploring satellite imagery and geospatial data and methods for the production of statistics such as land cover and land use.

V. Opportunities for regional action

A. Accelerated implementation of the region's commitments on statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

59. Accounts provide opportunities to accelerate the implementation of the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind at the national and regional levels, including through enhanced Asia-Pacific engagement in global initiatives.

²⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The Global Statistical Geospatial Framework" (New York, 2019).

²⁷ Information on the task team is available at <https://unstats.un.org/bigdata/taskteams/satellite>.

60. The work on accounting demonstrates the relevance and necessity of the commitments contained in the Declaration. For example, improving and expanding the production of accounts requires the collaboration and cooperation of multiple stakeholders. This in turn requires the specification of roles and responsibilities of the national statistical system, which is one of the commitments contained in the Declaration. Also, the commitments to integrate statistics development with national development policies and plans and to advocate the expanded use of official statistics for evidence-based policymaking and transparent governance are paramount to ensuring the relevance of accounts and promoting their use among policymakers. The commitment to establish a high-level advisory body to national statistical systems to represent users has been implemented in only 52.4 per cent of countries in Asia and the Pacific.²⁸ Accounts could be leveraged as an entry point for establishing a body to advise the chief statistician on policy priorities, for example in the context of the work of the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics.

61. In summary, enhanced action on accounts can help to leverage government support to fully implement the commitments contained in the Declaration. Regional collaboration on accounting could support national efforts to galvanize policy action by documenting and sharing best practices and advocacy in intergovernmental forums.

B. Enhanced Asia-Pacific leadership in global statistics development

62. The development of the Disaster-related Statistics Framework and the draft technical guidance on ocean accounting for sustainable development demonstrates that Asia and the Pacific can spearhead the development of new statistical methodologies and standards through regional collaboration. Momentum for such work has been generated by priorities and requests expressed by the Asia-Pacific policy community at the sessions of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

63. The numerous global initiatives in all areas of accounting represent an opportunity for Asia and the Pacific to build skills and share national and regional knowledge at the global level through membership and participation in global groups. Importantly, these global groups are continuously developing or revising methodological guidance and standards. Active participation by the Asia-Pacific statistical community in such global groups is necessary to ensure regional circumstances inform future methodologies. However, in most cases, the region is not well-represented in global groups (see annex I). In order to increase the footprint of Asia and the Pacific in these groups, member States with an interest in one of these topics may wish to consider joining relevant groups. They may also wish to reach out to member States already participating in several global groups (for example Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines) for advice on what participation entails or, through them, to convey issues of regional importance for inclusion in the development or revision of methodologies. Lastly, there is also opportunity for regional groups to engage more with global groups.

64. Some global initiatives are testing and experimenting with new methodologies in various countries. The Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts plans to test guidance notes on emerging research issues in both developed and developing countries before a major update of the System of National Accounts. Similarly, UNWTO seeks to initiate more pilot studies in countries to develop the statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism. Member States may also want to consider testing SEEA Experimental

²⁸ See ESCAP/CST/2020/1.

Ecosystem Accounting in anticipation of its adoption by the Statistical Commission at its fifty-second session. These efforts present opportunities for participation in the global research agenda on national accounts and tourism satellite accounts by a broader range of member States, with possible facilitation by the secretariat.

65. The Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics also presents an opportunity for the region to lead progress in a specific area of economic statistics, namely distributional accounts. In light of the interest in distributional accounts expressed at the 2019 Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific management seminar on the future of economic statistics and their relevance to the pledge to leave no one behind, Asia and the Pacific may wish to take a leading role in this area. In addition, more member States could participate in testing and experimenting with ocean accounts.

C. Collaboration on multi-domain statistics

66. The collective vision and framework for action, in particular action area C on integrated statistics for integrated analysis, highlights the need for national statistical systems to accelerate their capacity to integrate data sources and establish integrated production and reporting systems. Accounts can support this endeavour by linking economic, environmental and social statistics as exemplified by the work on measuring sustainable tourism, tourism satellite accounts, ocean accounts and disaster statistics, which all use data from different areas of statistics to populate an accounting framework that can allow for more integrated and coherent analysis.

67. In addition, action area A of the collective vision and framework for action, on engaging users and investing in statistics, emphasizes the importance of the responsiveness of national statistical systems to the needs of users. The cross-cutting nature of the 2030 Agenda and other development agendas such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 requires the use of multi-domain statistics in monitoring their implementation. By linking different dimensions of sustainable development, accounts can help to address the emerging demand for integrated, multi-domain statistics and provide users with consistent and coherent indicators.

D. Sharing of research, experimentation and experiences

68. There is a growing appetite for increased sharing of research and experiences in Asia and the Pacific. In the conclusion of the report on the 2019 Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific management seminar, emphasis was placed on the importance of sharing global knowledge at the regional level and vice versa, and of increased collaboration between countries to learn best practices and better understand new methods being tested in other countries.

69. The positive feedback received from member States that have participated in the regional initiatives on environmental-economic accounts, tourism satellite accounts and disaster-related statistics suggests that there is demand and an audience for documenting and sharing these experiences throughout the region. The sharing of research, experimentation and experiences through country pilots were also central features of developing the Disaster-related Statistics Framework and the draft technical guidance on ocean accounting for sustainable development, laying the foundation for the region to influence global statistical development in these areas.

70. The success of the Asia-Pacific Statistics Week highlights the demand for regional forums where statisticians can present their research and exchange experiences. It also demonstrates the benefits of informal mechanisms to advance statistics in the region. The communities of practice modality for regional collaboration, decided by the Committee on Statistics, is another example of an informal and cost-effective mechanism for regional collaboration. In line with the recommendation of the Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics to trial new working arrangements, the region may wish to reassess its current working and networking arrangements and move towards less formal collaboration mechanisms. The communities of practice could also be employed to facilitate regional engagement in global work.

VI. Issues for consideration by the Committee

71. The Committee may wish to discuss how regional collaboration on accounts may best support and strengthen national efforts and how accounts may feature in its future work.

72. The Committee may also wish to consider and express its view on each of the opportunities for regional action to support national, regional and global efforts as outlined in section V of the present document.

Annex I

Asia-Pacific representation in selected global advisory groups on global standards, frameworks and classifications relevant to accounts

<i>Country/group</i>	<i>Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics¹</i>	<i>Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics²</i>	<i>Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts³</i>	<i>Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism⁴</i>	<i>Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting⁵</i>	<i>London Group on Environmental Accounting⁶</i>
Armenia	Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia					
Australia	Australian Bureau of Statistics (Co-chair)	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Australian Bureau of Statistics		Australian Bureau of Statistics (Bureau member) Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian National University
Bangladesh	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics					
Bhutan					National Statistics Bureau	
Cambodia	National Institute of Statistics					

¹ As of April 2020.

² As of May 2019 (see https://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/events/2019/FOCG/FOC_List_of_Participants.pdf).

³ As of December 2019 (see <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/docs/AEGmembers.pdf>).

⁴ As of May 2020.

⁵ The table indicates participants at the 14th meeting, held in June 2019 (see https://seea.un.org/sites/seea.un.org/files/14thunseea_participants_list_2019.pdf).

⁶ As of April 2020.

<i>Country/group</i>	<i>Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics¹</i>	<i>Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics²</i>	<i>Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts³</i>	<i>Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism⁴</i>	<i>Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting⁵</i>	<i>London Group on Environmental Accounting⁶</i>
China	National Bureau of Statistics of China				National Bureau of Statistics of China	National Bureau of Statistics of China
Fiji				Fiji Bureau of Statistics		
Hong Kong, China	Census and Statistics Department					
Indonesia	Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik-Indonesia)	Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik-Indonesia)	Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik-Indonesia)	Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik-Indonesia) Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy Directorate General of Immigration	Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik-Indonesia)	Statistics Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik-Indonesia)
India	Central Statistics Office Reserve Bank of India				Central Statistics Office	
Japan	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications		Economic and Social Research Institute Cabinet Office			Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Lao Statistics Bureau					
Malaysia	Department of Statistics Malaysia (Co-Chair)	Department of Statistics Malaysia		Department of Statistics Malaysia Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia	Department of Statistics Malaysia	Department of Statistics Malaysia
Maldives	National Bureau of Statistics					

<i>Country/group</i>	<i>Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics¹</i>	<i>Friends of the Chair group on economic statistics²</i>	<i>Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts³</i>	<i>Working Group of Experts on Measuring Sustainable Tourism⁴</i>	<i>Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting⁵</i>	<i>London Group on Environmental Accounting⁶</i>
Mongolia	National Statistics Office of Mongolia				National Statistics Office of Mongolia	
New Zealand	Statistics New Zealand					Statistics New Zealand
Pakistan	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (Co-chair)					
Papua New Guinea	National Statistics Office					
Philippines	Philippine Statistics Authority			Philippine Statistics Authority Department of Tourism	Philippine Statistics Authority	Philippine Statistics Authority
Republic of Korea	Statistics Korea					Statistics Korea
Russian Federation	Federal State Statistics Service		Federal State Statistics Service		Federal State Statistics Service	
Samoa	Samoa Bureau of Statistics				Samoa Bureau of Statistics	
Singapore	Singapore Department of Statistics (Co-chair)		Singapore Department of Statistics			
Turkey	Central Bank of Turkey Turkish Statistical Institute					
Viet Nam	General Statistics Office					

Annex II

Core set of economic statistics

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Category of statistics</i>
Prices and costs	Consumer price index
	Producer price index
	Commodity price index
	External merchandise trade price indices
	Wages/Earnings data
	Labour costs index/Wage index
Demand and output	Gross domestic product (production) nominal and real
	Gross domestic product (expenditure) nominal and real
	External trade – merchandise
	External trade – services
	Short-term indicator – industry output
	Short-term indicator – services output
	Short-term indicator – consumer demand
	Short-term indicator - fixed investment
	Short-term indicator - inventories
	Economy structure statistics
	Productivity
Income and wealth	Integrated national accounts
	Institutional sector accounts
	Balance of payments
	International investment position
	External debt
	Income distribution
Money and banking	Assets/Liabilities of depository corporations
	Broad money and credit aggregates
	Interest rate statistics
Government	General government operations
	General government debt
Labour market	Labour supply and demand
	Hours worked
Natural resources and the environment	Natural resources