

OA and National Planning Integration

Helps planning officials design the inter-ministerial coordination arrangements needed to embed ocean account outputs into national development plans.

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OUTCOME

After reading this Circular, planning officials will be able to get ocean account outputs into national development plans, blue economy strategies and international reporting on time and in a usable form. Its subject is the flow of outputs into the planning cycle: which output a planning authority needs at each entry point, in what form, and by when.

Section 3.1 sets out the entry points – situation analysis, priority setting, target setting in a blue economy strategy, and monitoring and evaluation – and Section 3.2 states what each requires and the three failure modes that recur: the output arrives after the decision, the output is a table when it needed to be a finding, and targets are set in terms no account can verify. Section 3.3 covers international reporting architectures from the planning-integration side, where the case for the compilation budget is usually made.

The institutional arrangements that produce the accounts are outside this Circular. Coordination models, champions and regional platforms are treated in [TG-0.8 Implementation Readiness Assessment](#) Sections 3.5 and 3.9; data-sharing agreements, technical working groups and platform design in [TG-4.7 National Data Coordination Architectures](#); and how governance arrangements are themselves measured and recorded in [TG-3.7 Governance Accounts](#). Indicator derivation for SDG, GBF and climate reporting is [TG-2.10 Multilateral Environmental Agreement Indicators](#).

Ocean accounts generate outputs that cut across the mandates of multiple agencies. SEEA EA Chapter 13 notes that an “integrated and standardized set of accounts” can support balanced decisions across social, environmental and economic dimensions. That integration does not happen automatically, and it does not happen at all if the output reaches the planning authority after the plan is written.

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ABOUT THIS CIRCULAR**RECOMMENDED CITATION**

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<https://guidance.oceanaccounts.org/circulars/section-1/1-10-national-planning/>

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¶1 ⓘ Framework Position

¶2 This Circular addresses the governance design that connects ocean accounting outputs to national planning processes. In the Ocean Accounts Framework (TG-0.1 Figure 0.1.2):

Edge	Direction	Description
E7	SG2 → FG1	Social assets (governance frameworks) enabling economic flows
E8	SG2 → FG2	Social assets (governance arrangements) enabling social activities

1. Outcome

¶1 After reading this Circular, planning officials will be able to get ocean account outputs into national development plans, blue economy strategies and international reporting on time and in a usable form. Its subject is the flow of outputs into the planning cycle: which output a planning authority needs at each entry point, in what form, and by when.

¶2 Section 3.1 sets out the entry points – situation analysis, priority setting, target setting in a blue economy strategy, and monitoring and evaluation – and Section 3.2 states what each requires and the three failure modes that recur: the output arrives after the decision, the output is a table when it needed to be a finding, and targets are set in terms no account can verify. Section 3.3 covers international reporting architectures from the planning-integration side, where the case for the compilation budget is usually made.

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¶4 Ocean accounts generate outputs that cut across the mandates of multiple agencies. SEEA EA Chapter 13 notes that an “integrated and standardized set of accounts” can support balanced decisions across social, environmental and economic dimensions¹. That integration does not happen automatically, and it does not happen at all if the output reaches the planning authority after the plan is written.

2. Requirements

¶1 Essential prerequisites:

- ¶2 **TG-0.1 General Introduction to Ocean Accounts** – for the conceptual framework and key components of Ocean Accounts, including the multiple-capitals framework for well-being and sustainability
- ¶3 **TG-1.1 OA and National Budget Processes** – for the specific procedures by which ocean account outputs feed into budget formulation, medium-term expenditure frameworks, and fiscal planning

¶4 Helpful background:

- ¶5 **TG-3.7 Governance Accounts** – for the methods used to compile governance accounts that document institutional arrangements, legal frameworks, and policy instruments

- ¶6 **TG-3.8 Combined Presentations** – for the integrated account presentations that bring together environmental, economic, and governance data for policy users
- ¶7 **TG-4.7 National Data Coordination Architectures** – for the data-sharing agreements, technical working groups, and platform design that underpin inter-agency ocean data flows

¶8 Readers approaching Section 1 for the first time should begin with **TG-1.0 Ocean Accounting and the Blue/Ocean Economy**, the framing circular for the section, which sets out the ocean economy terminology used throughout, what an ocean account can and cannot certify about a blue economy claim, and the map from a policy question to the circular that answers it. It is recommended reading, not a prerequisite.

3. Guidance Material

3.1 Embedding OA Outputs in National Development Plans

3.1.1 The rationale for planning integration

¶1 National development plans establish a country's medium- to long-term priorities for economic growth, social development, and environmental management. These plans set the strategic direction that annual budgets, sectoral strategies, and international commitments are expected to follow. For ocean-rich countries – including small island developing States, coastal nations with significant exclusive economic zones, and countries whose economies depend substantially on marine resources – the absence of ocean-related information from national development plans can result in planning frameworks that systematically undervalue marine natural capital and fail to account for the sustainability of ocean-dependent economic activities.

¶2 The 2025 SNA's new chapters on well-being and sustainability (Chapters 34–35) identify other dimensions of well-being and sustainability that “can be addressed through a suite of thematic and extended accounts”². Ocean accounts are precisely such a thematic account, providing standardised data on marine natural capital stocks, ocean ecosystem service flows, and the depletion-adjusted economic contribution of ocean sectors that development plans should consider.

¶3 The Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) partnership (2012–2021) demonstrated that natural capital – including fisheries, mangroves, coral reefs, and other marine assets – should be treated alongside produced and human capital when assessing a country's total wealth and development trajectory³. WAVES activities were subsequently transitioned to the Global Program on Sustainability (GPS), hosted at the World Bank. Ocean accounts extend this approach to the marine domain, providing the specific data structures needed to incorporate ocean wealth into national wealth assessments.

3.1.2 Entry points in the planning cycle

¶1 National development plans typically follow a multi-year cycle comprising situation analysis, priority setting, strategy formulation, implementation programming, and monitoring and evaluation. The governance design must ensure that account outputs are available in the right format at the right time. The most important entry points are:

¶2 **Situation analysis and diagnostics.** At the outset of a planning cycle, governments assess the current state of the economy, society, and environment. Ocean accounts provide a structured evidence base for this assessment across three account types:

- ¶3 Ocean economy thematic accounts (**TG-2.5 Structure and Function of the Ocean Economy**) quantify the sector's contribution to GDP, employment, and exports.
- ¶4 Asset accounts (**TG-3.1 Asset Accounts**) reveal whether marine natural capital is being maintained or depleted.

- ¶5 Ecosystem service flow accounts (**TG-3.2 Flows Between Environment and Economy**) document the benefits that ocean ecosystems provide to coastal communities and the broader economy.

¶6 The governance coordination body (the coordination arrangements are in **TG-0.8 Implementation Readiness Assessment** Section 3.5) should ensure that a “state of the ocean economy” synthesis is prepared and submitted to the planning authority during the diagnostic phase.

¶7 **Priority setting and resource allocation.** Depletion-adjusted ocean GVA calculations (see **TG-1.1** Section 3.4) provide the evidence needed to argue that resource management investment is a precondition for sustaining the ocean economy’s contribution to national income. If fish stock accounts record declining biomass, or ecosystem extent accounts record mangrove loss, these trends should be reflected in planning priorities alongside more conventional economic indicators.

¶8 **Monitoring and evaluation.** Because accounts are compiled on a regular cycle using consistent methods, they generate comparable time series that track progress against plan targets. The indicators derivable from ocean accounts – including ocean economy GDP share, fish stock biomass trends, ecosystem extent changes, and depletion-adjusted income measures – can serve as headline indicators for ocean-related development plan objectives. This approach aligns with SEEA EA Chapter 14’s guidance that the coherence of information across accounts is particularly important when indicators are designed to support national sustainability policies⁴.

3.1.3 Blue economy strategies

¶1 A **blue economy strategy** is a national policy framework or strategic plan that designates marine and coastal resources as priorities for sustainable economic development⁵. The guidance in this section applies equally to standalone blue economy strategies and to blue economy chapters embedded in broader national development plans. Many countries – including Seychelles and Kenya – have adopted standalone strategies, whilst others integrate blue economy objectives directly into their national development plans. A more developed conceptual architecture for the blue economy, including the linkages between blue economy measurement and national statistical frameworks, is set out in the World Bank (2022) *Blue Economy Development Framework*⁶.

¶2 A blue economy strategy grounded in ocean accounts can specify targets in terms of measurable account entries: (1) ocean economy GVA growth rates that do not exceed sustainable yield limits, (2) ecosystem extent targets for mangrove restoration or marine protected area expansion, and (3) condition thresholds for coral reef health or water quality that must be maintained as ocean industries expand. See **TG-2.5 Structure and Function of the Ocean Economy** for the account structures that underpin blue economy measurement.

¶3 The governance coordination body should ensure that the national statistical office (NSO) or designated compilation agency is formally tasked with producing the account outputs needed to monitor blue economy strategy targets. This requires a standing arrangement – not a one-off data request – that links the accounting compilation cycle to the strategy’s reporting cycle. The coordination models in **TG-0.8 Implementation Readiness Assessment** Section 3.5.1 provide options for establishing this standing arrangement.

3.1.4 Aligning compilation cycles with planning timelines

¶1 A persistent challenge in using environmental-economic accounts for planning is the lag between the reference period of the accounts and the planning decisions they are intended to inform. Many countries compile national accounts with a one- to two-year lag, and environmental accounts may face additional delays due to the complexity of ecosystem data collection. Countries should address this timing challenge through three strategies.

¶2 First, establish a regular compilation schedule aligned with the planning cycle. The coordination body should establish a release date that provides sufficient lead time for analytical synthesis ahead

of the planning review diagnostic phase, typically six months or more, subject to national planning cycles. Second, consider producing provisional or “flash” estimates for the most recent period, following the approach used by many NSOs for preliminary GDP estimates. Even approximate figures for the latest year are more useful for planning than precise figures that arrive after decisions have been made. Third, use asset account projections to extend the time horizon beyond the latest available data. The asset account structure (opening stock, additions, reductions, closing stock) supports forward projection under alternative policy scenarios, as demonstrated in the MTEF integration procedures described in **TG-1.1** Section 3.6.

3.2 Getting account outputs to the planning authority on time

¶1 The binding constraint on planning integration is rarely whether the accounts exist. It is whether the right output reaches the right forum in the window when it can affect the decision. Table 2 sets out what that requires at each entry point.

¶2 *Table 2: Account outputs by planning-cycle entry point*

Entry point	Output required	Form	Timing
Situation analysis and diagnostics	State-of-the-ocean-economy synthesis: ocean GVA and its share of GDP, employment, asset trajectories for the major stocks, ecosystem extent and condition trends	Short synthesis with a small number of headline series, not the account tables	Submitted during the diagnostic phase, typically six months or more before the plan is drafted
Priority setting and resource allocation	Depletion-adjusted ocean GVA and the gross-to-net gap; asset trajectories under current policy	The gap and its trend, with the natural capital cost stated in currency terms (TG-1.1 Section 3.4)	Before sectoral allocations are fixed
Target setting in a blue economy strategy	Measurable account entries: GVA growth bounded by sustainable yield, extent targets for restoration or protection, condition thresholds to be maintained	Targets expressed as account entries, so that progress is verifiable from the next compilation rather than from a bespoke survey	At strategy drafting
Monitoring and evaluation	The same indicators, recompiled on the same basis	Time series with methodological revisions flagged separately from real change	Each compilation cycle, aligned to the plan’s review points

¶3 Three failure modes recur, and all three are avoidable.

¶4 **The output arrives after the decision.** National accounts commonly lag one to two years, and environmental accounts often more. Where the lag exceeds the planning window, provisional or flash estimates for the most recent period are more useful than precise figures that arrive too late, provided they are labelled as provisional and subject to revision. The alternative – supplying nothing – means the plan is written against whatever numbers are to hand, which are usually worse.

¶5 **The output is a table when it needed to be a finding.** A planning authority in a diagnostic phase cannot use an account table. It can use a statement that the ocean economy contributes a stated share of GDP, that the share is growing whilst the asset base underlying it is not, and what that implies for the growth targets under consideration.

¶6 **Targets are set in terms the accounts cannot verify.** A target expressed as “improve marine ecosystem health” cannot be monitored from any account. A target expressed as an extent in hectares, a condition index against a stated reference, or catch against sustainable yield can be, and is checked automatically by the next compilation.

¶7 Asset accounts also support projection beyond the latest available data. The opening-stock, additions, reductions, closing-stock structure allows forward projection under alternative policy scenarios, which is what extends the evidence to the plan's horizon (see **TG-1.1** Section 3.6 for the MTEF case and **TG-2.1** Section 3.6.2 for condition trajectories).

3.3 International Reporting Architectures

¶1 Countries face a growing set of international reporting obligations that draw on ocean data – the SDGs, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement, regional fisheries bodies, and the BBNJ Agreement. The mapping from account entries to each indicator is set out in **TG-2.10 Multilateral Environmental Agreement Indicators**, which is normative for indicator derivation across all of these frameworks.

¶2 The planning-integration point is narrower, and is worth stating separately because it is where the investment case is usually won. SEEA EA para 14.28 notes that ocean accounts allow a country to report to multiple monitoring frameworks from a **single coherent database**. Mapping the country's obligations against the account entries that serve them has two effects: it demonstrates that one compilation programme serves several reporting commitments at once, which strengthens the budget case; and it exposes duplication, where the same fish stock data are currently compiled separately for SDG 14.4.1, for RFMO reporting and for domestic fisheries management. Consolidating those into one compilation reduces workload and removes the inconsistencies that arise when the same underlying quantity is reported three times from three processes.

¶3 Whoever coordinates the accounting programme should ensure the national SDG focal point, the CBD focal point and the UNFCCC focal point are each connected to the compilation cycle, so that indicator reporting draws on the accounts rather than running a parallel data collection.

4. Acknowledgements

¶1 **Authors:** [To be confirmed]

¶2 **Reviewers:** [To be confirmed]

5. References

1. ¶1 United Nations. (2021). *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting – Ecosystem Accounting*, para 13.77. Adopted as a statistical standard by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 52nd session, March 2021.
2. ¶2 United Nations. (2025). *System of National Accounts 2025*, Annex 4, paras A4.110-A4.112: Broadening the framework of national accounts to address well-being and sustainability. Adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 56th session, March 2025.
3. ¶3 World Bank. (2021). *Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES): Lessons Learned and Next Steps*. Washington, DC: World Bank. The WAVES programme (2012–2021) supported natural capital accounting implementation in over 20 countries, generating evidence on institutional arrangements for integrating natural capital data into development planning. WAVES activities were subsequently transitioned to the Global Program on Sustainability (GPS), hosted at the World Bank.
4. ¶4 United Nations. (2021). *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting – Ecosystem Accounting*, para 14.35.
5. ¶5 World Bank. (2017). *The Potential of the Blue Economy: Increasing Long-term Benefits of the Sustainable Use of Marine Resources for Small Island Developing States and Coastal Least Developed Countries*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
6. ¶6 World Bank. (2022). *Blue Economy Development Framework*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.