

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Meeting of the 2015/2016 Bureau
Geneva (Switzerland), 21-22 October 2015

Item 4(g) of the Provisional
Agenda

OUTLINE OF A ROAD MAP FOR MONITORING SDG-S

COMMENTS BY COUNTRIES

I. BACKGROUND

Denmark (general comments):

- One of our major considerations goes in the direction of the future reporting requirements of the indicators. To our knowledge it has not yet been decided how the countries/regions are to report the SDG indicators – neither the frequency nor the number of indicators. Is the idea to report all the indicators on the annual basis or, for example in sequences, such as indicators on goals 1 to 4 in the year 2016, indicators on goals 5 to 8 in 2017 etc., and then again in the year 2020 indicators on goals 1 to 4. In our opinion clarification of the issue of frequency of reporting of the SDG indicators is very important to outlining the future statistical work on the SDG and defining the priorities both for the UNECE region and globally.
- If possible, concrete dates for achieving different milestones in the road map could clarify the prioritisation of the efforts. Furthermore, the road map should balance the SDG ambitions, the current situation of the statistical coverage of the SDG indicators, and real possibilities for national driven capacity-building. We are a strong proponent of a systematic and realistic approach and we clearly support prioritisation of our work.
- There are indicators that are not strictly statistical in nature or have a very narrow contact to statistics. Is it expected that statistical institutions also will cover those indicators? Clarifying this issue would help in targeting efforts towards improving statistical base for the indicators.
- In the current discussion about the resources for the work with the SDG indicators, the prevalent (but not tangible) opinion is that there are resources available for work with SDG indicators and capacity-building. Are there any concrete resources to be channelled to statistical SDG work and capacity-building? And if so, can they be directed towards specific SDG related statistical initiatives?
- We find it very important to emphasize in the road map that SDG indicators are to be compiled in accordance with international rules and guidelines.

Paragraph 7(b) on contributing to work of IAEG-SDGs

Switzerland: Additionally, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for post-2015 monitoring (HLG for post-2015 monitoring) should be mentioned. The road map developed on the regional could also contribute to a road map (and an action plan for statistics) on the global level. Regarding the terms of reference, it will be the HLG that will deal with it and not the IAEG-SDGs.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE ROAD MAP

Para 10 (b)

United States: Another section would be helpful here on how UNECE will work with other UN regional bodies to provide inputs to the HLG (and perhaps, the World Data Forum).

Para 10 (d) correction by Canada:

(d) strategy on how to deal with the ~~required~~suggested disaggregations of data;

Para 11 on additional issues to be considered by road map (development of indicators for UNECE regions; development of baselines

Switzerland: Those additional issues should be treated very carefully. It is very important to avoid another list of indicators that represent only the wishes of different actors. We absolutely need to start to work with a conceptual framework at the UNECE level (and apply our own recommendations) to select the right indicators. Otherwise, we will end up with a pile of data and indicators (global and regional) which will be impossible to communicate.

Sweden: This looks like policy work that we would not typically launch in the statistical community. We recommend that the work is more concerned with how to make sure that statistics that mirror the items in the global indicator list are in place. (The indicators in the EU sustainable strategy that already are coordinated and available might be an inspiration though when looking at what type of statistics have proved to be comparable).

United States: Item 11 (b) development of the baselines for targets could be clarified further. Would this refer to reporting initial statistics for the SDG indicators, to be used as benchmarks for progress against targets?

A. Outline of the setup of reporting on SDGs in the UNECE region

United States: This section may be heavily influenced by the UNSC HLG's direction to all member countries. Perhaps that should be emphasized. Coordination of the setup from the perspective of Eurostat as a provider of SDG statistics could be discussed in this section.

Para 13 (b) on links between the national, regional and global level monitoring

United States: Regional indicators have not yet been identified, which we think is appropriate since global indicators have not yet been identified. So, discussion of linkages between global, regional, and national indicators (b) might need to wait a bit before being added to this document. A placeholder could suffice.

Para 13 (c) on establishment of a national focal point for SDG monitoring

Sweden: Is this an organisation such as the stats bureau, or is it a ministry?

Denmark: For us it is not perfectly clear what the role of such body should be. In Denmark, Statistics Denmark acts as a national (statistical) coordinator for the SDG indicators. But SDG monitoring can also be understood in a broader context such as a national follow up on the goal and targets. The latter is seldom within the mandate of statistical institutions.

Para 13 (d) on distribution of tasks between stakeholders

Germany: and NSIs?

Sweden: We hope that there is recognition that these tasks are already being performed by various actors in the statistical system. We do not want to have parallel systems, where the

countries need to prepare special national reports for data that is already reported to Eurostat and OECD.

Para 13 on the setup on SDG monitoring

United States: Several of these items (a, c, d, e, and f), with regard to global and national indicators and their monitoring, will be the purview of the UNSC and national statistical offices, respectively. If this section discusses global and national indicators and monitoring, it should emphasize the roles of UNSC and national statistical offices in those tasks.

Para 15 first bullet, on review and monitoring framework at UNECE level

Sweden: It is not certain that the UNECE member states will want to do this, except for the coordination of the data that goes to the global monitoring systems, as the region does not have an overarching policy system. It is not clear who will push for regional UNECE monitoring. We have global monitoring and national monitoring on the table now. Who would be the target audience for a regional monitoring – that does not already have data from the statistical system?

Para 15 last bullet on collaboration with other data producers

United States: Coordination of data providers, including non-traditional data sources, might be discussed best in the section, “identification of new areas of statistics where internationally harmonized indicators need to be developed in cooperation with international organizations, academia, civil society, and other stakeholders.”

B. Identification of new areas of statistics where indicators need to be developed

Switzerland: Working with a conceptual framework and building an indicator system is a powerful tool to detect gaps in data and priorities statistical development

United States: We strongly endorse this section. To the extent that UNECE members agree with the description of these sets as “tier 1, 2, and 3” as referring to indicators “conceptually clear, measured well and often,” “conceptually clear, measurement issues being worked out, not widely measured,” and “conceptually unclear, measurement issues to be resolved” it may be valuable to adopt that common terminology in this document. This section could describe how UNECE will offer its recommendations to the HLG, the latter which we believe is tasked with this effort.

Para 18 third bullet on inventory of indicators

Sweden: The inventory cannot be done on the level of indicators – such studies have indeed been made, but they are cumbersome and have not proven to lead to harmonisation of work. Instead, the inventory should be based on statistical areas, as they are the basis for indicator follow up.

The word ‘metadata’ can mean different things. There is a lot of metadata being produced in the statistical system already, and that can probably be used, if needed. The real issue lies in the existence of data series themselves and if they can be harmonised between countries and show the issues that they are believed to portray.

Para 18 additional bullet:

- **Germany:** After the adoption of the first (preliminary) list of indicators by the UN Statistical Commission 2016, an initiative should be launched to close the then remaining indicator-data gaps at UNECE level. Examples for such data gaps are relating to “illegal activities”, “monitoring of the means of implementation” or targets regarding sustainable

management and economies. Closing those gaps is an urgently needed follow-up work. Therefore a workgroup of MS and UNECE international agencies should be set up.

C. Communication strategy towards other data providers and users of official statistics

United States: We strongly endorse this section re communication challenges.

Para 20 (a) on communication with policy makers

Switzerland: This is important and that's why we need first the conceptual framework and the "rules of play". It helps to have a balanced "list" of indicators and keep statistical independency in the dialog with policy makers.

Denmark: communication with policy makers is essential. From our perspective is it essential to convey to the policy makers a message about the challenges connected to statistical work with the SDG indicators. It is still unclear whether the politicians are aware of the amount of work required and whether they are ready to support statistical capacity-building in the Member States.

Para 20 (c) on communicating with data providers

Switzerland: Good point! Official statistics should present how we can work together with other data producers. The World Data Forum will be very necessary for this dialog. We official statisticians have to be careful and not leave this field only to initiatives like the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD). Currently, Switzerland is not supporting the GPSDD. But if we don't show how we are dealing with non-official statistics producers, the pressure from the capital will raise in the next month to support this initiative.

D. Strategy on how to deal with the ~~required~~-suggested disaggregations of data (*correction by Canada*):

United States: We strongly endorse this section. Paragraph 74g of the resolution describes which data disaggregation should be used to inform indicator selection. However, we do not believe it has yet been finalized as to whether the global indicators are required to be disaggregated across all of these dimensions. It may be the case that some disaggregation may be possible as a set of regional indicators, where they would not be agreed upon for the global set.

Para 23 (c) on solutions how to provide disaggregated data

Switzerland: Here again, the conceptual framework helps a lot and it should be mentioned

Para 24 additional bullet point:

- **Germany:** Disaggregation is a key element of the Agenda 2030, it is crucial for analytical purposes, to address inequalities and thus to fulfil the "leave no one behind" idea and we should not lose this out of sight. To have a solid footing for this requirement, we should first dedicate our time and resources during the Bangkok meeting to the establishment of a reasonable indicator framework that meets the pure requirement of the targets. Possible disaggregations should – where they are not explicitly asked by the target – be a topic of an immediate follow-up process on further developing the indicator set. We should carefully determine the level of disaggregation indicator by indicator, depending on the political needs and the capacities available.

E. Plan for necessary capacity building for reporting on SDGs

Para 26 on capacity building

Switzerland: This work is important and it could be used on a later stage for the work on the global level in the HLG and the World Forum. (We hope that the UNECE will be an active member in both bodies.)

Denmark: we fully support the need for identification of the areas where capacity-building is most urgently needed. This is also to be conducted in accordance with a clear strategy on the SDG approach in the UNECE region. We are though in doubt what form of communication is mentioned here – is it communication beyond publishing the indicators?

Para 27 last bullet point – correction by Sweden:

- We need to formulate a plan where **statistical** capacity building is described in the short-, middle- and long term to **serve as a fact base for sustainable development guarantee a national, regional and global monitoring.** (Switzerland)

Sweden: The issue of bringing statistical capacity is to ensure the statistics for the fact based development to happen. The guaranteeing of monitoring at various scales seems to be just one of several activities that can come out of this capacity building – also it can well concern the countries outside the UNECE region.

F. Collaboration between various international agencies in the UNECE region

Para 28 on collaboration between international organizations

Switzerland: This is a central point for us. UNECE Executive Secretary Friis Bach will organize a meeting with all other institutions in the UNECE region at the political level. FSO showed in the capital in Switzerland what we are doing in statistics (collaboration with OECD and Eurostat). I think we statisticians are well prepared. We could show the political community what we have done and will do together.

III. PROPOSAL FOR A DECISION BY THE BUREAU

Para 31

Switzerland: Is there a road map for the road map? When should the road map be finished? Will it ever stop or should it be active for the next 15 years? If yes, will we have a rotation system in this body?

Para 32

Denmark, Germany, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and United States have confirmed their participation in the Steering Group

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