

Session 6 - The way forward: Meeting the SDG measurement challenges together

Conclusion from discussions – Actions in the Road Map and their
implementation

UNECE Expert Meeting on Statistics for SDGs

Co-Chairs of the UNECE Steering Group, 12 April 2017, Geneva



Sessions of the Expert Meeting

- Session 2: National strategies and plans for measuring SDGs;
- Session 3: National reporting on global SDG indicators;
- Session 4: Coordination of data flows and harmonization of statistics for SDGs in the region;
- Session 5: Coordination of capacity building.



Session 2: National strategies and plans for measuring SDGs - Conclusions



- 1) Member country national road maps or plans of action are generally not publicly available. Sharing examples of national plans and preparing a general template will be helpful.
- 2) Dialogue with policymakers is important to set priorities at the national level, particularly given the scarce resources for producing statistics for SDGs.
- 3) The need to share best practices on national coordination and consultation related to statistics for SDGs was identified.
- 4) A national assessment of available data may be helpful in identifying data providers and data gaps within a country;

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Session 2: National strategies and plans for measuring SDGs - Conclusions



- 5) NSOs have a key role in reporting SDGs. However, data will also come from institutions outside of the national statistical system. The role of NSOs is not yet clear with respect to quality assurance of data produced by non-official sources.
- 6) National sustainable development indicator sets that serve a clear national purpose should complement global SDG reporting.
- 7) Effective communication strategies of SDG indicators to the general public and policymakers should be further developed and implemented.

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Session 2: National strategies and plans for measuring SDGs – Proposed next steps



- a) Provide a template for a national road map on reporting statistics for SDGs. An expanded outline may be sufficient.
- b) Encourage countries to share even preliminary outlines on wiki to facilitate dialogue between NSOs. These outlines could include:
 - A description of (intended, current, or best) practices in establishing a dialogue between NSOs and policy makers.
 - Results of national assessments of data availability. (An assessment tool is on the wiki now.)
 - Experiences in establishing national indicator sets and lists of national SDG indicators.

Session 2: National strategies and plans for measuring SDGs – Proposed Next Steps



- c) UNECE CES Steering Group should develop guidance for NSOs on communication strategies related to statistics for SDGs. Collecting best practices in this area will be useful.
- d) The UNECE CES Steering Group should cooperate with the UNECE group working on statistical communication and dissemination (the group is organising a workshop on 28-30 June 2017 in Geneva). Explore possibility of a joint workshop in future.

Session 3: National Reporting on Global SDG indicators - **Conclusions**



- 1) National Reporting Platforms (NRPs) are useful tools to provide information on SDG indicators. NRPs are also useful in documenting the role of the different data producers.
- 2) Areas of work to be noted in NRP Task Force Guidelines for National SDG Indicators Reporting Mechanisms include:
 - Use (and expansion) of SDMX (liaise with IAEG SDMX subgroup);
 - Facilitating collaboration between countries;
 - Encouraging greater coordination within countries;
- 3) International organizations also have developed/are developing dissemination platforms that can be used for SDG reporting (e.g., IMF and OECD). These could be explored to see how they could be leveraged to address wider reporting needs (such as supranational reporting).

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Session 3: National Reporting on Global SDG indicators – **Proposed Next Steps**



- a) The Task Force will consider the issues raised during the Expert Meeting in preparing its guidelines.
- b) Request NSOs to send links to their national platforms (even in draft form) to UNECE CES for posting on wiki.
- c) Request the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) to provide specific references to custodian agency mandates under which SDG reporting is proposed.
- d) Facilitate discussion of reporting platforms between the Task Force and interested international organizations.

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Session 4: Coordination of Data Flows and Harmonization of statistics for SDGs in the region -- **Conclusions**



- 1) All data flows on SDG indicators must reflect the principle of country ownership. This must be reconciled with agency mandates and the custodian system that has been agreed by UNSC.
- 2) The basic path to generate global statistics for SDGs flows from countries to custodian agencies and custodian agencies to UNSD.
- 3) The meeting identified many details yet to be addressed:
 - Indicators that a country cannot compile on its own (including PPP-based); that are sometimes reported by other countries (e.g., aid flows), or Tier III indicators that are still being developed.
 - Procedures to follow when national data differ from globally harmonized data in a way that cannot be explained.

Session 4: Coordination of Data Flows and Harmonization of statistics for SDGs in the Region -- **Conclusions**



- 4) IAEG-SDGs has constituted a drafting team on how data flows should work. The drafting team is led by Germany and Cameroon. They will develop guidelines on how custodian agencies and countries can work together to coordinate data flows necessary to have harmonised statistics. A draft is expected for the next IAEG-SDGs meeting in the fall. Final guidelines will be submitted to UNSC in 2018.
- 5) Meanwhile progress on SDMX can speed up the data flows and reduce the reporting burden.

Session 4: Coordination of Data Flows and Harmonization of statistics for SDGs in the region – Proposed Next Steps



- a) The Steering Group will summarize the discussion of the Expert Meeting and make proposals to the co-chairs of IAEG-SDGs. The following elements will be included:
 - Improve the metadata;
 - Improve verification processes between countries and custodian agencies;
 - Prepare the following lists of focal points for SDG reporting: focal points in the national statistical systems, focal points in custodian agencies, and custodian agency focal points in countries;
 - Request a schedule of reporting deadlines from custodian agencies and from UNSD;
 - Consider revising the deadline for country data validation to align with preparations for UNSC meetings;
- b) Launch a working group of selected countries and agencies (possibly 3 of each) to pilot data flows over the summer 2017.

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Session 5: Coordination of capacity building - Conclusions



- 1) Coordination of capacity building is very important to avoid duplication, streamline capacity building efforts provided by different donors, and take into account priorities and absorption capacity of countries.
- 2) Capacity building is relevant for all countries. Conceptual work is needed to clarify definitions and terminology related to capacity building.
- 3) Need for translation of documents related to statistics for SDGs into Russian and making them available in a commonly accessible place to facilitate work on statistics for SDGs in EECCA countries.
- 4) Coordination of capacity building provided to a specific country can be best done at national level

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Session 5: Coordination of capacity building – Proposed Next Steps



- The Steering Group will consider how to incorporate the outcomes of the discussion during the Expert Meeting into the UNECE CES SDG Road Map chapter «Building Statistical Capacity for Indicator Reporting».
- It is needed to rethink the approach to capacity building. This may include:
 - mainstreaming SDGs in national strategies of developing statistics;
 - sharing outcomes of capacity building to extend the benefit;
 - mapping the supply and demand of capacity building;
 - involving NSOs in the capacity building efforts of custodian agencies;
 - leveraging (limited) resources by building partnerships.

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Proposed Follow-Up and Decisions



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Decision 1: Facilitate National Plans for SDG Statistics



Issue: A national road map/work plan is essential. However, most member countries do not yet have a national SDG road map.

- The UNECE Steering Group will develop a generic outline/template for national road maps and collect examples from countries on wiki.
- Components of these national road maps should build upon (existing) national statistical plans. The plans could include: establishing effective dialogue between NSOs, other national authorities, and policy makers; an assessment of national data availability; selection of national indicators, if any; and communication strategies.
- The template and the example outlines provided by countries will be discussed at the next Steering Group Meeting

Decision 2: Facilitate Communication



Issue: Developing an effective communication strategy with policy makers, expert users, custodian agencies, the general public and the media is essential for successful reporting on (national and) global SDG indicators.

- The UNECE Steering Group will consider how to best facilitate this, including developing guidance for NSOs on communication strategies related to statistics for SDGs, and collecting best practices in this area (to be made available on wiki). The Steering Group should cooperate with the UNECE work stream on statistical communication and dissemination, and explore organizing a joint workshop.
- The UNECE Steering Group will contact IAEG-SDGs and UNSD on the concerns raised during the Expert Meeting, including the following items:
 - Request custodian agencies to provide a list of focal points on SDG indicators in their organizations, and of the focal points of custodian agencies in countries.
 - Request NSOs to provide a list of focal points for SDG indicators in NSOs and in the statistical system.
 - Request a schedule of reporting deadlines for SDG indicators from custodian agencies and from UNSD;
 - Consider revising the deadline for country data validation to align with preparations for UNSC meetings.

Decision 3: Leverage Innovation



Issue: Several models of national reporting platforms now exist. We should encourage sharing and training. Innovation should now focus on ways to address the different reporting challenges.

- The Task Force on NRP will consider the issues raised during the expert meeting and will reflect them in the *Guidelines for National SDG Indicators Reporting Mechanisms*.
- The Task Force will invite custodian agencies to discuss their plans and intended use of platforms. Consideration will be given to leveraging comparative advantages in platform design and needs. Development of processes to facilitate «machine pulling» from national reporting platforms will be explored.

Decision 4: Mapping Data Flows



Issue: Several **global** data flow scenarios are possible. Establishing responsibilities for NSOs and custodian agencies while maintaining flexibility to address national circumstances and non-traditional data sources is essential.

- The UNECE CES Steering Group proposes to conduct a pilot to map specific data flow processes and thereby better understand the needs of NSOs, custodian agencies, and UNSD.
- This pilot will include NSOs with different reporting circumstances and custodian agencies, and will cover a few selected indicators from economic, social, and environmental area.
- A brief on the outcome of the pilot will be provided to IAEG-SDGs for their Fall 2017 meeting for considering in generating guidance on data flows for approval by UNSC in March 2018.

Decision 5: Think Differently about CB



Issue: The SDGs require **all** countries to (re)consider capacity building. Beyond quick wins through technology, sustainable CB needs consistency, patience, and fostering NSO management skills. There are many issues to be clarified around capacity building.

- The Steering Group will update the Section on capacity building in the CES Road Map in line with the outcomes of the discussion at the Expert Meeting. The recommendations on CB include: (i) build upon existing tools and mechanisms; (ii) facilitate sharing of already existing tools (i.e. Global Assessments)
- The Steering Group will raise issues related to statistical capacity building with the CES Bureau, including:
 - Conceptual issues of capacity building and clarifying terminology, having in mind that all countries need capacity building for SDGs
 - How to include in capacity building elements across the Generic Statistical Business Process Model beyond statistical production
 - How to map the supply and demand of CB
 - How to share outcomes of capacity building to extend the benefit, and leverage (limited) resources through partnerships
 - How to facilitate coordination of capacity building within countries and at the regional level.

The Steering Group will make a proposal to possibly set up a group (Task Force) to deal with these issues. This group should coordinate and collaborate with the existing related international initiatives (e.g. the Paris21 working group).

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Decision 6: Staying on Track



Issue: We need to maintain momentum without running out of gas!

- The UNECE Steering Group will update the regional **road map** based on the electronic consultation in advance of the CES as well as on the discussions during the expert meeting.
- The next UNECE Steering Group meeting **agenda** will cover two topics: a) discussion of the pilot study results; and b) describing what capacity building means for this region.
- It is proposed to **organise a second Expert Meeting** on statistics for SDGs in (tentatively in April 2018).
- The Steering Group will prepare a proposed **work plan** to the CES including recommendations regarding the timing and focus of a next Expert Meeting.
- These outputs will be presented to the CES for discussion and adoption.

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Parting Thoughts from a Co-Chair



- We heard things that surprised us.
- We learned many people are working very hard to do good.
- We all embrace responsibility—if only we could agree on who is responsible for what.
- We learned that cooperation is occurring, but too often it is limited to a common group (cooperation among NSOs, or cooperation among custodian agencies and international organizations).
- **We need to think about how to include each other within our current work processes. What can UNECE CES Expert Group on SDGs do?**

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We may think we are alone facing these issues...



...but we find we are in good company!

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