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#### **How to implement the monitoring system for the Sustainable Development Goals**

### **Conference of European Statisticians road map on statistics for Sustainable Development Goals**

#### **Note by the Steering Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals**

#### *Summary*

The document presents a zero draft of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) road map on statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is prepared by a Steering Group set up for this purpose by the CES Bureau in October 2015, following a decision of the Conference in June 2015.

The road map aims to guide the CES work related to statistics for SDGs. It deals with topics, such as the context of the work (relevant UN decisions and other groups working in the area); assessing readiness of countries to report on SDG indicators; selecting regional indicators; reporting mechanisms and data flows on SDG indicators; statistical capacity building for SDGs; and communication of statistics for SDGs.

This document constitutes a first draft of the road map submitted to CES for comments and input. The Conference is invited to express its views on the general approach and focus of the road map, its contents and structure, and the proposed next steps. The members of the Conference are also invited to express interest in participating in the work on specific sections of the road map.

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## I. Introduction

### A. Mandate

1. The 2015 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) decided to “launch work on a road map for the development of official statistics for monitoring SDGs.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Conference noted that this road map “could contribute to a future action plan at a global level to succeed the Busan action plan for statistics adopted in 2011”.
2. In June 2015, the CES plenary session approved the *Declaration on the role of national statistical offices in measuring and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals* (ECE/CES/89/Add.1)<sup>2</sup>. The Declaration:
  - (a) calls upon national governments to support national statistical offices in their key role in measuring and monitoring SDGs in countries, and recognizes the importance of cooperation at local, national, subregional, regional and global levels in monitoring SDGs; and
  - (b) emphasizes the importance of efficient coordination of SDG monitoring and reporting at regional level between relevant international organizations and between international organizations and national statistical offices.
3. In October 2015, the CES Bureau decided to set up a Steering Group to provide guidance on the work on developing official statistics for SDGs under CES. The main objectives of the Steering Group, as defined in the terms of reference, are: (i) to prepare a road map for developing official statistics for SDGs under CES. The road map will provide a strategy on how to implement a system for providing data on SDGs, and guide the CES members in implementing the Declaration adopted by the Conference in 2015; (ii) to follow up on the implementation of the road map.
4. The following countries and organizations are members of the Steering Group: Switzerland (co-chair), United States (co-chair), Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, Turkey, Eurostat and OECD. UNECE acts as its Secretariat.

### B. Objectives and approach

5. The Road Map aims to guide the CES work on statistics for SDGs. It lays out the landscape of providing statistics for SDGs: the context (relevant UN decision and mandates), what needs to be done, who is doing what and when, who are the other stakeholders, and what are the opportunities for cooperation.
6. The mechanisms for follow-up and review of SDGs at policy level and the measurement and reporting at statistical level are currently taking shape. This process is expected to continue for some time before it stabilizes. The Road Map aims to provide a structured set of information about the ongoing developments and ensure that official statisticians actively contribute to these processes.
7. The Road Map will be a living document, to be updated by the Steering Group to take into account the comments by CES and developments within different UN bodies and groups, such as the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs),

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the CES 2015 plenary session ECE/CES/89, para 23, available at [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2015/Rep\\_1512361E.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2015/Rep_1512361E.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=38920#/>

High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity Building for the 2030 Agenda (HLG-PCCB), PARIS21, etc.

8. The draft road map is presented to CES for comments and input.

## II. Context

### A. The 2030 Agenda

9. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), including 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, was agreed in September 2015 by heads of state and governments' high representatives. SDGs aim to spur progress between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. They also create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities.

10. The Goal 17 aims to "strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development". Its targets 17.18<sup>3</sup> and 17.19<sup>4</sup> as well as several paragraphs in the outcome document "Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development"<sup>5</sup> refer directly to the work of the official statistical community. The UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) is responsible for ensuring reporting on SDGs at the global level.

11. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that the regional level is an important bridge between national and global reporting and monitoring<sup>6</sup>.

### B. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators

12. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators was established in March 2015. Its aim is to develop a list of indicators for the monitoring of the Goals and targets of

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<sup>3</sup> Target 17.18: By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

<sup>4</sup> 17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries.

<sup>5</sup> For example, paragraphs 48, 57, 74, 75, 76 and 83. The targets 17.18 and 17.19 address the work of statistical offices. The role of these targets is highlighted in paragraphs 61 and 62: 61 "[...] The means of implementation targets under each Sustainable Development Goal and Goal 17, which are referred to above, are key to realizing our Agenda and are of equal importance with the other Goals and targets. We shall accord them equal priority in our implementation efforts and in the global indicator framework for monitoring our progress."; 62 "[...] It relates to domestic public resources, domestic and international private business and finance, international development cooperation, international trade as an engine for development, debt and debt sustainability, addressing systemic issues and science, technology, innovation and capacity-building, and data, monitoring and follow-up."

<sup>6</sup> Paragraphs 80 "Follow-up and review at the regional and subregional levels can, as appropriate, provide useful opportunities for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets. We welcome in this respect the cooperation of regional and subregional commissions and organizations. Inclusive regional processes will draw on national-level reviews and contribute to follow-up and review at the global level, including at the high-level political forum on sustainable development." and 81 "Recognizing the importance of building on existing follow-up and review mechanisms at the regional level and allowing adequate policy space, we encourage all Member States to identify the most suitable regional forum in which to engage. United Nations regional commissions are encouraged to continue supporting Member States in this regard."

the 2030 sustainable development agenda at the global level, provide technical support for the implementation of the approved indicator and monitoring framework until 2030, regularly review methodological developments and issues related to the indicators and their metadata, and report on progress towards the Goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at the global level. The group should also regularly review and make recommendations on capacity-building activities relevant to SDG monitoring to the Statistical Commission, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for the 2030 Agenda and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, and support work by the Secretariat for the development of a Sustainable Development Goal data-user forum, tools for data analysis and an open dashboard on the state of SDGs<sup>7</sup>.

13. In 2016, UNSC endorsed IAEG-SDGs' continued mandate to inter alia evaluate the methodological needs of proposed indicators and to facilitate a process to address these technical issues to allow more robust reporting. To assess the availability of data and methodologies for the SDG indicators on the global list, IAEG-SDGs is using a tier system, as follows:

- Tier I indicators are those that are conceptually clear, agreed definitions, methodology and standards are available and data are regularly produced by countries<sup>8</sup>;
- Tier II indicators are conceptually clear, agreed definitions, methodology and standards are available but data are not regularly produced by countries;
- Tier III are indicators for which there is no established methodology and standards, or the methodology/standards are being developed or tested.

14. Additionally, IAEG-SDGs will consider the following in planning refinements or additions to indicators:

- Indicator maps well to the target, and
- Indicator/s cover all aspects of the target.

15. Where conceptual work is a barrier to reporting (Tier III), consultations with country and NGO experts will be necessary. This work is being planned by IAEG-SDGs.

### **C. The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

16. The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB) was established in 2015. Its task is to provide strategic leadership for the sustainable development goal implementation process with regard to follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. HLG-PCCB is responsible for building-up a reporting system at the global level<sup>9</sup>. HLG-PCCB

<sup>7</sup> See Terms of reference of IAEG-SDGs, Annex I of the report to UNSC, E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1

<sup>8</sup> In accordance with the decisions taken by the Statistical Commission, the methodology to be used for calculating statistics for SDG global indicators has to be reviewed and agreed upon by national statistical offices (i.e., IEAG-SDGs). Hence "agreed methodology" and "agreed definitions", means agreed upon by IAEG-SDGs.

<sup>9</sup> See mandate of HLG-PCCB: Point "1 (a) Provide strategic leadership for the SDG implementation process as it concerns statistical monitoring and reporting within the framework of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;"

collaborates with IAEG-SDGs regarding the development of a global reporting mechanism<sup>10</sup>.

17. The 47<sup>th</sup> UN Statistical Commission in 2016 decided that HLG-PCCB should develop a Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. This will provide a road map for the modernization and strengthening of statistical systems to meet the 2030 Agenda<sup>11</sup>. In addition, UNSC declared that a Global Action Plan should take into account existing regional road maps<sup>12</sup>.

#### **D. CES Steering Group on statistics for SDGs**

18. UNECE Conference of European Statisticians anticipated developments regarding SDGs monitoring at an early stage. A first seminar on measuring sustainable development was held in 2013. The second seminar, “Response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals” in 2015 discussed the role of the official statistical community at the regional level. One output was the “Declaration on the role of national statistical offices in measuring and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” that is the basis of this road map.

19. CES has been working on measuring sustainable development since 2005. In 2009, the CES Bureau set up a task force to develop the *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development*. More than 60 countries from the UNECE region and beyond (including OECD member countries) and the major international organizations endorsed the CES Recommendations in June 2013. In 2015, CES set up a task force to adjust the sustainable development measurement framework presented in the CES Recommendations to SDGs and targets.

20. Against this background, the main aim of the CES Road Map on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals is to analyse the challenges related to statistics for SDGs, provide guidance to countries on how to meet them and recommendations on how to coordinate the work within CES. This includes identifying who is working on which issues, why and where it is necessary to invest in more capacity, and defining the priority steps. It is planned to add an annex to the Road Map: a matrix that provides an easy overview of who does what and when.

21. The Road Map is not only aimed at the statistical community participating in the CES work. As described earlier, it could contribute to the global action plan that will be developed by HLG-PCCB. Moreover, by showing what kind of work has to be undertaken and where funding is needed, it should also serve as a useful tool providing structured information for all NSOs, international organizations and other stakeholders (e.g. PARIS21) concerned with statistical capacity building.

22. The Road Map is covering five substantive sections. Section 3 deals with assessing the readiness of countries to report on global indicators. Section 4 discusses the selecting of regional indicators while Section 5 covers the reporting on SDG indicators. Section 6 addresses the aspects of developing capacity building for SDG indicators. Section 7 discusses the communication strategy on statistics for SDGs.

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<sup>10</sup> See E/CN.3/2016/2: “IAEG-SDGs Workplan”, point 37: “(a) Agree on the global reporting mechanism, including identifying entities responsible for compiling data for global reporting on individual indicators to be provided to the Secretariat;”

<sup>11</sup> UNSC Decision 2e concerning the Item 3a: Data and indicators for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

<sup>12</sup> Idem.

23. The Steering Group will develop the CES' Road Map using wiki and regular teleconferences. A first physical meeting will be held on 5 and 6 September in Neuchâtel in Switzerland.

### **III. Assessing readiness to report on SDGs indicators**

24. National statistical offices will play a central role in reporting on SDGs. According to the outcome document "Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development", paragraph 74, follow-up and review processes at all levels will be "rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts."<sup>13</sup>

25. To implement these decisions, countries have to assess their readiness to provide data on SDGs for the global, regional, subregional and national reporting, and to identify new areas where statistics and indicators need to be developed to inform on SDGs (e.g. governance).

26. Some data can be derived from international organisations databases. This could be the case when international standards and agreed methodology of data exist.

#### **A. Identifying who can provide what**

27. A first task will consist in distinguishing the non-statistical indicators (e.g. indicators on quality of law) from the statistical ones. Countries' statistical systems can mainly focus on statistical indicators and to identify who can provide what.

28. International organisations should carry out an exercise of assessing data availability in their databases.

#### **B. Identifying data gaps, methodology gaps and conceptual issues**

29. The Steering Group will guide countries in assessing data gaps and methodology gaps, and in identifying conceptual issues. The assessment can identify indicators that are already produced, indicators that can be produced within short term as data and internationally agreed methodology exist, and indicators that need long term development including methodological work. The UNECE Secretariat, together with Eurostat and OECD, will assist in conducting the assessments.

#### **C. Strategy on the required disaggregation of data**

30. At its 47th Session, the UN Statistical Commission agreed that "improving data disaggregation is fundamental for the full implementation of the indicator framework and to fully reflect the principles of the 2030 agenda to ensure that no one should be left behind, and stressed that efforts should be made to strengthen national capacities in this area and to develop the necessary statistical standards and tools, including by establishing a working group to work on data disaggregation as a subgroup of the IAEG-SDGs." (decision 1(n)). This decision is in line with the 2030 Agenda which states that "quality, accessible, timely

<sup>13</sup> A/RES/70/1, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)

and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision-making". (para 48).

31. Any CES work in this area will be done in close collaboration and coordination with the IAEG-SDGs working group on data disaggregation. The tasks at regional level will be to:

- (a) Identify regionally relevant disaggregation areas;
- (b) Investigate how the disaggregation of relevant indicators can be best performed;
- (c) Review national experiences and best practices for disaggregation of statistics underlying the indicators.

32. Based on the initial list of disaggregation areas identified by the IAEG-SDGs working group there is a need to identify what exists at regional level in relation to disaggregation and where further work is needed. All relevant SDG indicators should be disaggregated by sex, age groups, income groups and geographic locations, according to statistical practice.

33. The statistical principle of confidentiality is very important, particularly in cases when disaggregating according to criteria that make the identification of an individual respondent easier.

34. In addition to confidentiality, there are other considerations to be taken into account, such as legal provisions (NSOs may not be legally allowed to collect data on certain topics), political issues (data disaggregation may have risks for the protection of the rights of sub-populations), data availability, cost and quality concerns (e.g. the survey sample may be too small to allow disaggregation into specific groups).

35. In line with and in support of the work of IAEG-SDGs, the CES Steering Group could assign a subgroup to:

- Analyse and compare SDGs and targets with the indicators to ensure that the concept of leaving no one behind is covered within the indicator framework;
- Review best practices and country experiences on selected issues particularly to make sure that the confidentiality of the respondents can be assured;
- Propose strategies to undertake work on data collection mechanisms and the use of data sources, like data from administrative registers and big data, to obtain data on the required subgroups of population.

#### **D. CES framework as a tool helping to identify possible data providers and indicator gaps**

36. In June 2013, the UNECE and OECD member countries endorsed the *CES Recommendations for measuring sustainable development*, prepared by a joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force. The CES Recommendations provide a universal approach to measuring sustainable development combining a strong theoretical basis and a clear link with policy needs. The Recommendations draw on three conceptual dimensions of wellbeing referring to meeting the needs of the present ('here and now') and future generations ('later') and of people living in other countries ('elsewhere'). These three dimensions are linked to policy relevant themes that cover the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development. The themes and dimensions, and the structure that draws them together, constitute what is referred to in this document as the 'CES framework'.

37. An important advantage of the CES framework for measuring sustainable development is its link to the traditional areas of official statistics, such as health, education, labour, water, energy, etc. Using data produced according to the standards of official statistics helps to ensure the quality, availability and international comparability of indicators and hence the measurement of sustainable development. For example, the themes related to economic capital (physical capital, research, development and innovation and financial capital) are directly linked to the System of National Accounts (SNA 2008). The environment-related themes (like water, land and ecosystems, energy resources, mineral resources, etc.) are linked to the system of Environmental-economic Accounting (SEEA). This encourages the use of data from national accounts and SEEA for calculating the indicators relevant to these themes.

38. A Task Force set up by the CES Bureau adjusted the CES framework to SDGs and mapped the SDGs and targets with the themes in the CES framework<sup>14</sup>. This mapping allows to group SDG targets according to themes which can facilitate the organisation of work, for example in producing SDG indicators, identifying data sources, communicating with data providers and users, identifying gaps in current official statistics, etc. A theme-based approach may also be helpful in identifying statistical areas where methodologies need to be developed to measure SDGs, capacity building needs, and statistical areas where the regularly produced data can be helpful in providing statistics for SDGs.

## IV. Selecting regional indicators

### A. Relevant UN decisions

39. The Agenda 2030 document (A/RES/70/1) says that “The Goals and targets will be followed up and reviewed using a set of global indicators. These will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels which will be developed by Member States.” (para 75).

40. The 2016 UNSC Statistical Commission report emphasized that the “global indicators proposed are intended for global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are not necessarily applicable to all national contexts. Indicators for regional, national and subnational levels of monitoring will be developed at the regional and national levels”<sup>15</sup>.

41. Furthermore, the Agenda 2030 calls for follow-up and review at national, regional and global levels. The setup of the regional reviews at policy level is currently being discussed at UNECE (a dedicated meeting on this issue will take place on 10 May). The regional follow-up and review at policy level needs to be informed by regional indicators.

42. When developing any regional indicators, it should be carefully considered how these indicators comply with the criteria set for the SDG indicators, namely that “This [indicator] framework will be simple yet robust, address all Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including for means of implementation, and preserve the political balance, integration and ambition contained therein (para 75)”.

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<sup>14</sup> An overview of this work is provided in an interim report by the Task Force, document ECE/CES/2016/18. In the first stage of work, the Task Force adjusted the themes in the CES framework, and mapped the SDGs and targets with the CES themes and dimensions. The work is planned to continue focusing on the SDG indicators.

<sup>15</sup> Draft Decision 2i concerning the Item 3a: Data and indicators for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/Draft-report-on-the-47th-session-of-the-statistical-commission-Rev1-E.pdf>

43. The CES framework can also help in exploring how to complement the set of global indicators with regional or national indicators. Many countries already have national sustainable development indicator sets with clear links to the CES framework. The adjusted CES framework can be useful for analysing how these indicator sets could be revised to take into account SDGs while maintaining continuity with the system used to measure sustainable development until now.

## **B. Possible criteria/issues to be considered for regional indicators**

44. Regional indicators will be needed for informing the regional and subregional follow-up and review at the policy level, reflecting the regional priorities that may be different from global priorities. The Steering Group will discuss the need for regional indicators in the context of CES, and define the criteria that could be used for selecting such indicators.

45. A decision on regional indicators should be well justified, taking into account that the indicators will be used until 2030. Such a decision is ultimately a decision about the scope and focus of regional review and follow-up. It may depend on political rather than statistical considerations. In the case of the EU, for example, an EU-wide political strategy could emerge which would put particular emphasis on elements of the SDGs and targets that are of particular relevance in an EU context. In May 2016, the UNECE with the participation of OECD and the European Union will discuss the regional implementation of the SDGs. This meeting should be used to get in touch with the regional political community to explain and discuss this issue.

46. There are several options how to select the regional indicators.

47. The simplest solution could be to decide that the regional indicator list is exactly the same as the global indicator list. However, this has no regional benefits other than simplicity.

48. Another option could be that the regional indicators are a subset of the global list addressing a subset of the global targets. This has to take into account the regional policy priorities.

49. The third option could be a decision that additional or different indicators (or disaggregations of indicators) would be needed to address the priorities relevant at regional level.

50. However, an important consideration is that a regional indicators list should not (considerably) increase the reporting burden. If a selected regional indicator can be compiled based on data regularly produced by official statistical systems, then the additional burden will not be that high. A balance has to be found between the information gathered through such additional indicators and the cost of their compilation.

51. A possible justification for the need of regional indicators could be that:

- Countries in each region have their own priorities which may differ from the global priorities;
- The level of statistical development of the countries in the region may make it possible to use more “developed” indicators than at the global level;
- Developing regional indicators can help countries in considering how to develop national indicators.

52. Regional indicators which are different from the global ones may be needed in the following cases:

- The SDG target is not relevant for the region (e.g. the target is focused on developing or least developed countries; policy relevance has to be decided by policy makers) -> drop of global indicator from the regional indicator list;
- Regional indicator could focus better on regional conditions and priorities (these priorities depend on policy decisions) -> replacement of global indicator by a more targeted regional indicator;
- The global indicator may not be ambitious enough for the region; -> replacement of a global indicator by a more suitable regional indicator;
- If a specific global indicator is not yet available (Tier III), a different indicator which is available can be selected for the region as a temporary replacement;
- The global indicator covers only part of the target (an analysis of the Task Force on adjusting the CES framework to SDGs can be helpful for this purpose) -> add a regional indicator.

53. Furthermore, establishing headline indicators for Goals could be considered at the regional level (the global SDG indicator list includes indicators for each target but there are no indicators for Goals). These indicators could be selected from among the existing global SDG indicators, or from among the possible regional indicators.

54. The global SDG indicator list comprises objective indicators. At the regional level, the role of subjective indicators could be considered.

55. The following criteria for selecting regional indicators need to be discussed:

- Focus on indicators that are classified as Tier II and Tier III, or on the ones that do not emphasize the most relevant regional aspects;
- Keep a balance between statistical, policy and institutional indicators (e.g. such as the number of countries which have adopted a specific policy). The number of countries that have adopted a certain policy measure is relevant at the global level, less useful at the regional level and not very useful at the national level (once a country has introduced a specific policy, the indicator does not measure any progress);
- Keep a balance between output and outcome indicators and input indicators (that means, measuring both the existence of certain policies and their impact). The use of these indicators should be in line with type of the target (whether the target addresses input or outcome);
- Prefer indicators that are produced by the statistical system, following established standards and agreed methodologies;
- Take into account the existing Sustainable Development Indicator lists by the international organizations in the region (such as Eurostat);
- Select multipurpose indicators whenever possible;
- Minimize reporting burden, taking into account that a number of the global indicators may be produced by international organizations (especially the qualitative indicators) and thus do not put a burden on the statistical systems.

56. In selecting regional indicators, the right balance has to be found between the benefit of having (additional) information relevant for the region and the reporting burden on these indicators. Furthermore, any decision on regional indicators should be taken in consultation with the policy level.

### C. Process of establishing the regional indicators

57. The process of establishing regional indicators should follow a similar pattern as with developing the global list. Taking into account the work already done by IAEG-SDGs, the process may be simplified building on the experience acquired through the work of IAEG-SDGs.

58. The Conference of European Statisticians should decide about the need for specific regional indicators that are relevant for countries participating in the CES work, and agree on the criteria for the selection of these indicators. CES may mandate this task to the existing Task Force on adjusting the CES framework to SDGs with a possible change in the membership.

59. The list should then be adopted by the CES. After that, the list could be submitted for information to the UNECE Commission session.

60. The possible timeline for this work has to take into account the meetings of CES and its Bureau. The following general timeline could be considered:

- CES in April 2016 to decide on the need for regional indicators;
- establish a subgroup to work on the regional indicators (see the discussion regarding the subgroups);
- inform UNECE EXCOM on 10 May 2016, which will discuss the regional SDG review and follow-up;
- consult the regional indicators electronically with CES countries, make a proposal for the indicators to the February 2017 CES Bureau meeting;
- subject to a positive outcome of the consultation, submit the indicator list for endorsement by the CES 2017 plenary session.

### V. Reporting on SDG indicators

61. The UN Resolution 70/1 commits to a systematic follow-up and review of Agenda 2030, operating at the national, regional and global levels (paras 72 and 73). The Agenda 2030 document also refers to follow-up and review at subnational, sub-regional and thematic levels.

62. The reviews at different levels have to be “based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated ..“ (para 48). Furthermore, data and information from existing reporting mechanisms should be used where possible (paras 48 and 77).

63. In line with the follow-up and review processes, the reporting on SDG indicators can take place at subnational, national, subregional, regional and global levels. As a crosscutting element, the thematic reviews also have to be taken into account. Therefore, the setup of the reporting on SDGs has to be clarified at different levels and how these levels will interact with each other. To ensure consistency and avoid duplication, it is important to have a coordinated approach between the different levels, taking into account the already existing reporting mechanisms.

64. The CES road map will mainly focus on considering how the reporting on SDG indicators will work at regional, subregional and national levels. This will take into account the setup of reporting on SDG indicators at the global level which is currently being discussed. Therefore, the draft road map presents some first ideas that need further development.

## A. Specifications for a SDG reporting platform

65. A platform for SDG indicators is needed to support the reporting process. It should have three components: (i) data collection or submission portal to send/post data; (ii) a production data base and (iii) a dissemination portal where tables, texts and publications can be found. The dissemination portal should also be part of and be implemented in the communication strategy (see section 7 of this document).

66. The Steering Group proposes for the region that a SDG indicator database and dissemination platform which countries will use for reporting purposes meet the following specifications, which align with the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*<sup>16</sup> and the 2030 Agenda. It should be:

(a) **Country-Led:** The platform should facilitate the posting of data by national statistical offices which are required for calculating the global trends and indicators, and, only with explicit agreement of the national statistical office, data produced by other organizations on the country's behalf. It is to be decided by the national statistical office to limit its country data use to the compilation of globally and UN-regional aggregated indicators only. Countries may use established data delivery mechanisms such as through data collections arranged by Eurostat, OECD or UNECE in accordance to these organizations' mandates and responsibilities to deliver data either on country level or pre-aggregated by UN-regions (FPOS 1, 2, 4, 5, 6);

(b) **Comparable:** The platform should facilitate the transformation of posted data in order to allow compilation of sub-regional, regional and global indicators. (FPOS 8, 9, 10);

(c) **Transparent:** The platform should allow for posting of relevant metadata and other background documentation regarding limitations of the statistic/underlying data. This should include any transformations of the data, for what purpose, and by whom. (FPOS 3);

(d) **Timely:** The platform should allow reporting of statistics as they become available by member countries (that is, on a flow basis). Where statistics reported by a country have not yet been standardized for international comparability, this will be clearly indicated by the platform. (FPOS 5);

(e) **Publicly Accessible:** The platform should allow for public access to the subregionally, regionally and globally compiled indicators. (FPOS 1, 7).

## B. Data flow models

67. The setup of the reporting on SDGs needs to be clarified at different levels: global, regional, subregional, national, subnational and thematic levels.

68. Concerning the global level, at the conclusion of its 47<sup>th</sup> session, the UN Statistics Commission was informed that<sup>17</sup>:

*Internally, UNSD will initiate the development of an SDG indicator database and dissemination platform, and, as part of it, will review its existing cross-cutting outputs and their dissemination to optimize, align and integrate the production and dissemination processes, including those for the Statistical Yearbook and UNdata.*

69. At the national level, different scenarios are possible. These depend on the setup and the level of development of the statistical system in the country: centralised, decentralised,

<sup>16</sup><http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/fundprinciples.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/statements/statements-5-programme-statement-unsd-E.pdf>

or a combination of these. The possible scenarios of SDG data flows can range from a very centralised to a completely decentralised one. At one extreme, the NSO could be the single focal point for all data on the global SDG indicator list. At the other extreme, each data producer could communicate directly with the international entity that is collecting data on a specific topic. There could also be separate reporting streams for statistical and non-statistical indicators.

70. The data flow is generally linked to a quality assurance process, i.e. there should be a process for harmonizing data provided by groups of countries. It is also important to recognise that not all SDG indicators may be subject to the same treatment.

71. IAEG-SDGs started a discussion on data flows at its 3rd meeting in Mexico City in March 2016. At that time, it seemed that UNSD and the UN agencies would favour a situation where the UN agencies are a key transmission mechanism. In such a setup, existing data flows to these agencies would be used to the extent possible to avoid double reporting and it would not be necessary for countries to post these data again on a dedicated platform.

72. For the UNECE countries, a possible design could be that indicators collected by Eurostat would be taken from Eurostat, data for non-EU members of OECD from the OECD, and the remaining countries from UNECE where available. A platform could be established to build on the UNECE Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) database which could be linked to the UNSD platform.

73. For the UNECE countries that are not members of the European Statistical System (ESS)<sup>18</sup>, a reporting platform, compatible with the Eurostat platform, could be shared. The United States is exploring the development of such a pilot reporting platform, which could also be used by other interested countries.

74. Alternatively, a design of a data flow could apply to a sub-set of the indicators. It is conceivable that some indicators are submitted via established regional mechanisms maintained by Eurostat, OECD and UNECE. Some others are submitted via established data flows involving UN agencies (e.g. FAO, WHO or ILO). Other indicators may exist but there may not yet be a collection mechanism for them and a platform may need to be established, e.g. for many means-of-implementation indicators. For many tier III indicators there may at this stage not be an existing data flow because the indicators do not exist. Here, the question is who is responsible for advancing the methodological developments.

75. Given that the three-tier classification of the global indicator set is currently being completed by IAEG-SDGs, it is expected that both definitive and any alternative reporting arrangements (i.e. for Tier III indicators) will get clearer at a later stage.

76. At the 3rd IAEG-SDG meeting, the IAEG-SDG members were asked to send information about their possible scenarios for data flows to UNSD by 30 April. At this point in time, the role of regional commissions in contributing to a SDG indicator database is still not clear. However, this road map includes some principles and specifications that should be part of it.

### **C. Collaboration with international organizations**

77. According to the outcome document "Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development" (paras 80 and 83), regional organisations should contribute to ensure a regional follow-up and review on the SDGs, but also to support the process of the global follow-up and review. To accomplish these tasks, a *horizontal cooperation* between

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<sup>18</sup> ESS-Members are all EU and EFTA-countries.

actors at regional level as well as a *vertical cooperation* between actors at national, regional and global level is required.

78. To put in place an effective SDG reporting system at regional and subregional levels, collaboration is needed to organise data and metadata flows from national producers, and to analyse national and regionally aggregated data to produce regional/subregional reports.

79. Data flows for regional and subregional reporting must take into account the priorities of its Member States. Also considering the needs of global reporting, the set-up of data flows should aim at avoiding duplications in reporting lines.

80. Clear responsibilities should be attributed for ensuring the comparability of data, to avoid inconsistencies between data produced by NSOs and by different international, regional and subregional organisations.

81. Different scenarios may be foreseen for data collection, where data flows from national statistical systems could go either to global or to regional international organisations. However, when considering alternative options the fact that most of the data and metadata have been collected and stored in a database by Eurostat for ESS countries should be utilised for the sake of efficiency, consistency and reducing reporting burden on individual NSOs. The same applies for data collected and stored at OECD. The responsibilities for data have to be carefully defined. Data flows to global organisations would only concern the global indicators. Data flows for the regional indicators would still have to be organised at the regional level. Pros and cons of each approach need to be identified and assessed.

82. To ensure consistency and comparability, with regard to data analysis and data aggregation for the regional and subregional reports, it is important that Eurostat, OECD and UNECE pull together their knowledge and expertise. A specific mechanism for collaboration could be established under CES and its Bureau. The regional offices of the thematic UN agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, etc.) should be involved in the preparation of the regional SDG reports. Academia and data analysts in general may provide methodological support. The regional report would be a CES undertaking under the UNECE secretariat. An exact distribution of tasks between the different regional organisations needs to be established.

## **D. Special reporting situations**

### **1. Use of proxy indicators**

83. In some cases, data providers for a particular country may have statistics or other forms of information that are similar to, but not exactly the same, as a particular global SDG indicator. In these cases, countries may wish to report these “proxy” indicators. Reporting of such “proxy” indicators should be clearly noted. Decisions about whether to produce or acquire information to report both according to the global SDG indicator AND the current proxy indicator, or which of the two should be produced, will be affected by timing and funding considerations. Other considerations include frequency of use of the “proxy” indicator in policy making, breaks in time series, among other considerations. The use of proxy indicators should be presented to the attention of policy makers after the whole statistical capacity building potential is examined thoroughly.

## 2. SDG reporting by entities other than NSOs

84. As noted under the specifications for a platform (5.1), countries in agreement with their national statistical offices (ECE/CES/89/Add1) may choose to rely on the reporting by other entities. These could be OECD, Eurostat, UN agencies, or others.

85. Furthermore, countries may also choose to calculate statistics from data collected through private organizations, or to report statistics prepared by such organizations.

86. The statistics and other information posted on the global SDG indicator platform will be determined at the discretion of the particular country. This recognizes the authority, responsibility, and accountability of national statistical offices and their peer ministries for the statistics and other information reported on the platform.

## VI. Capacity building for SDG indicators

87. The 2030 agenda calls “for increased support for strengthening data collection and capacity-building in Member States, to develop national and global baselines where they do not yet exist”. In addition, Member States commit to address “this gap in data collection so as to better inform the measurement of progress, in particular for those targets below which do not have clear numerical targets” (para 57).

### A. Experience from the Millennium Development Goals

88. In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were launched. Developing countries agreed to report progress against 8 development goals over the course of a fifteen year period (until 2015). According to the report “A world that counts”<sup>19</sup>, at the end of this period, 26% of the statistics and related information reported for the MDGs was provided from countries themselves through the various UN agencies; 2% of the MDGs data were country adjusted; 23% were modelled by UN agencies and 3% were estimated by entities other than countries. The remaining 46% of the statistics or information needed for MDGs were not available for reporting at the end of the 15 year period.

### B. Modernization of official statistics and the SDGs

89. SDG reporting should take into account the lessons and the experience of the MDGs. At the global level, many countries will need to rely on data, statistics, and modelling completed on their behalf by other entities. Further, adjustments to reported statistics and related information will be necessary to ensure comparability across reporting countries. And, as was the case for the MDGs, most likely not all requested statistics and related information will be available from the statistical community.

90. However, a number of differences exist between the MDG experience and the SDGs that may affect reporting capacity of countries. Since 2000, information technology, data collection, and statistical production capabilities have expanded substantially. National statistical offices in both developing and developed countries have been called to modernize their processes to improve the timeliness, accuracy, accessibility, and transparency of their statistics.

91. There has also been a call for increased use of data collected initially for non-statistical purposes (such as “Big Data” and administrative records) as a way to improve the

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<sup>19</sup> “A world that counts”, p.12, <http://www.undatarevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/A-World-That-Counts2.pdf>

efficiency of statistical production. Calls for increased use of private source data and statistics for the calculation of official statistics also gain considerable support. Different initiatives and groups exist that are working on the modernisation of official statistics. These include Eurostat Vision 2020, UNSD and Eurostat work on the transformative agenda, the UNECE High-Level Group for Modernisation of Official Statistics is covering a large set of topics to enhance the modernisation of statistical production, including Big Data, and the Busan Action Plan for Statistics refers to strengthening the national statistical systems. All future steps should be based on the experiences of these initiatives and groups.

### **C. Capacity Building**

92. IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB will collaborate to assess unmet needs in statistical capacity building necessary for reporting on SDG indicators.

93. IAEG-SDGs will provide technical support for the implementation of the approved indicator and monitoring framework and regularly review methodological developments and capacity-building activities in statistical areas relevant to SDGs. The aim of HLG-PCCB is to provide strategic leadership for the SDG implementation process concerning statistical monitoring and reporting.

94. With the aim to establish priority capacity needs, an important component of any strategy to support capacity building is prioritization of needs. HLG-PCCB may consult inter-linkages between proposed indicators as one way of prioritizing. For example, some indicators for which there are unmet needs may cluster together by goal(s), which may encourage greater support from entities whose mission most closely aligns with that goal. Or, some types of unmet needs point to infrastructure requirements that, if met, would improve reporting capability for all countries.

95. HLG-PCCB, in consultation with IAEG-SDGs, will prepare a Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data for consideration by the UN World Data Forum in late 2016. The UNSC will have the chance to discuss the draft at the 48th UNSC in March 2017.

96. Against this background, a statistical capacity building programme under CES should take into account the plans and programmes agreed upon at global level and the specific needs of CES members.

## **VII. Communication and dissemination of statistics for SDGs**

97. Communication on statistics for SDGs has to take place at different levels (global, regional, national and subnational) and with different audiences: data users (policy makers, civil society, general public, media, academia, private companies, international organizations, specialised agencies, etc.) and data providers (within NSOs, within the statistical system, outside the statistical system).

98. In addition to communicating data, statisticians also have to communicate about the issues around the data, such as quality, resource requirements, data availability, value of official statistics on SDGs, etc. Many of the SDG indicators are not statistical indicators; the communication strategy also has to address that. Several countries have highlighted the importance of managing expectations of users, including policy makers, on what data and with which quality can be provided on SDGs.

99. Major stakeholders are also data users (e.g. policy makers, civil society, media, academia, private companies).<sup>20</sup> The statistical community needs to communicate the most important points of the planned work (this Road Map shall do it for the CES members) in order to reach out to the users and also identify further information that these stakeholders are interested in.

100. The Road Map itself is a communication tool. Communication is also needed among the statistical community to ensure transfer of knowledge about the work on SDG indicators. All countries are encouraged to implement the SDG indicators and they would benefit from the knowledge of experts who actively participated in the indicator development to understand how and why specific indicators were chosen.

101. In addition, it should be defined in advance what kind of information is necessary for stakeholders to get an overview of UNECE work in this area. The UNECE should determine what stakeholders should know and define the information to be offered accordingly.

#### **A. Available and required resources: Refer to what exists first**

102. Before developing a communication strategy, the Steering Group has to analyse the resources that are already available (financial, human and technical resources etc.). After getting a clearer picture of the available resources, establish the priorities that need financial support.

103. The work could begin with a stock-taking of existing dissemination platforms that can be used for the implementation of the CES Road Map. Existing data bases and other sources should be used. A key information source to reach out to stakeholders could be SDG monitoring reports produced by regional and subregional bodies, including CES and UNECE. It is essential to provide access to these reports, e.g. global, regional and national. Information could also be made available and be embedded in the UNECE Statistical Database. Ideally, the data should be aligned and consistent, and any differences should be explained.

104. New means and tools to communicate with stakeholders in a transparent and open manner should be used. The appropriate means to communicate on reporting of SDGs within CES could be to set up a customer management system approach for inquiries. Such a system should offer tailored outcomes to incoming requests, introduce users to the requested information and guide them through the range of information. As a first step, launch a dedicated website which is linked to relevant databases. An information package, that includes a database, publications in the form of reports, dedicated web sections, and visualization tools, could be useful as well.

#### **B. Guiding users through the information jungle on SDGs**

105. With regard to the SDGs, we can expect that there will be an exuberant information offer, including a large variety of information like reports, recommendations at policy level etc. It will be difficult for stakeholders to filter the relevant information.

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<sup>20</sup> For the UNECE work on reporting SDGs we identified the following key stakeholders classified in two main categories: data providers (NSOs, academia, etc.) and data users (policy makers, Global Partnership, civil society, private companies, etc.).

106. The communication strategy should focus on providing guidance to users through this “information jungle” and making existing information more transparent. Giving guidance should have a higher priority than developing new information tools.

107. Extensive information is offered at different levels (national, regional, global) which are not differentiated from each other. Future CES work should avoid confusing the stakeholders and users with uncoordinated information from different UN organisations. CES information tools should be closely aligned with other reporting levels, especially at the UN level, ideally also aligned with other regional UN organisations. It should be avoided to end up with different answers to the same question (or different data for the same case) for example from UNSD, UNECE and CES. The doubling of information should be prevented.

108. A competition between different organizations involved in reporting on SDGs should be avoided. The UNECE Secretariat could coordinate communication on SDGs with other relevant UN bodies (e.g. UNSD). At the same time a CES communication strategy should emphasize the specific added value of regional work. In addition, the work should include an explanation on limitations and delayed reporting of statistics and a plan to communicate progress and engage member inputs.

## VIII. Next steps

109. The draft road map is presented to CES for discussion and input.

110. Taking into account the comments by the Conference, the Steering Group will update the Road Map. The Steering Group will also consider concrete activities and priorities within the Road Map aiming to develop a work plan to implement the Road Map. This will take into account the activities by other international groups working on related issues, including IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB, to avoid duplication and identify where and how the Steering Group can contribute to the other working streams.

111. The Steering Group may propose to create subgroups for selected sections of the Road Map, to set up Task Forces, or to delegate the work to already existing groups under CES. Member States, international organisations and all other interested groups or partnerships could contribute.

112. The Steering Group will report back to the CES Bureau in October 2016 and in February 2017. The CES will have the possibilities to discuss and finalize the first edition of the CES’ Road Map on Statistics for SDGs at the CES 2017 plenary session.

113. The Road Map will be presented to the UNECE session (a meeting of the representatives of UNECE member countries at the policy level) in April 2017.

## IX. Points for discussion and decision

114. The Conference is invited to **express its views on:**

- The general approach and focus of the Road Map;
- The contents of various sections and the structure of the Road Map;
- The proposed next steps in Section VIII.
- **express interest in participating in the work on specific sections of the Road Map;**

- provide any additional information about the work of other relevant groups or initiatives that should be taken into account in the Road Map.

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