

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

For discussion and  
recommendations

Meeting of the 2018/2019 Bureau  
Washington, D.C., 28 February-1 March 2019

Item 3 (d) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**UNECE REGIONAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT;  
REPORTING ON ACHIEVEMENT OF SDGS IN UNECE REGION**

**Note by the Secretariat**

*The note provides information on the UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development that will take place on 21-22 March 2019 in Geneva. The forum includes a focus event on data and statistics.*

*Furthermore, the UNECE Executive Committee has requested the Secretariat to prepare an annual report on the regional progress towards SDGs based on existing statistics and data, starting from 2020.*

*The Bureau discussed the preparation of the focus event on data and statistics at the Regional Forum, and the plans for preparing an annual report on progress towards SDGs in the UNECE region, starting from 2020.*

**I. UNECE REGIONAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

1. UNECE has been organising annual multi-stakeholder fora on Sustainable Development in the UNECE region since 2017. The 2019 Forum will take place on **21-22 March 2019 in Geneva**<sup>1</sup>. It is expected that in April 2019 the UNECE session will decide to hold such fora also in 2020 and 2021. The aim of the Fora is to focus on practical value-added and peer learning, and create a regional space to share policy solutions, best practices and challenges in SDG implementation.

2. The 2019 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD) will include a High-level policy segment, two focus events and a set of peer learning round tables. The participants of the Forum include representatives of country governments (country missions in Geneva to UN, ministries of foreign affairs and other government agencies), other UN agencies and intergovernmental organizations, academia and non-governmental organizations.

3. The peer learning round tables in 2019 will consider those SDGs that will be reviewed in-depth at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2019 in New York, namely: Goal no. 4 'Quality education', Goal 8 'Decent work and economic growth', Goal 10 'Reduced inequalities', Goal 13 'Climate Action', and Goal 16 'Peace, justice and strong institutions'.

4. The focus events will provide a space for discussion and learning on cutting-edge topics affecting the overall implementation of SDGs. The topic of the first focus event is

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unece.org/sustainable-development/rfsd2019.html>

‘Technology, digitalisation, artificial intelligence – curse of blessing for sustainable development?’ (Friday, 22 March morning 10:00 – 11:25).

5. The second focus event is entitled ‘**How to measure progress? Data and statistics for SDGs**’ and will take place on Friday 22 March at 11:35 – 13:00. The event is co-organized by UNICEF and the UNECE Statistical Division.

6. The first part of the event will be a panel discussion, including representatives of national statistical offices, private sector and civil society. The second part of the event will be an interactive discussion from the floor. It is expected that the participants will be mainly a non-specialised audience with limited technical expertise on data and statistics. Representatives from the statistical offices of Armenia, Switzerland and UK have confirmed their participation in the event.

7. The focus event on statistics and data is planned to deal with the following issues:

- a) How is data and statistics used to provide evidence for policy-making and to accelerate SDG progress?
- b) Where do we stand with regard to SDG data and statistics? What has been the progress since 2015? What are the persisting gaps and challenges?
- c) How can statistical capacities be strengthened at the country level?

8. The key messages from the focus event will be taken into account by the Chair of the Regional Forum in his overall summary of the Forum which will be an input to HLPF and to the UNECE session in April 2019.

## **II. UNECE REGIONAL REPORT ON PROGRESS TOWARDS SDGS**

9. The UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) has requested the Secretariat to prepare an annual report on the regional progress towards SDGs based on existing statistics and data, starting from 2020.

10. This is subject to a decision of the UNECE Commission session in April 2019. It is expected that the Commission will decide to ‘publish a yearly report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE region to support the discussions at the sessions of the Regional Forum, with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum for sustainable development that year, **using existing data sets and statistics**’.

11. The guidance that has been given on the statistical part of the report until now is that it should:

- a) be based on existing data sets and statistics;
- b) be produced by existing UNECE resources;
- c) include a general overview of all 17 goals and focus on the goals that are under review at HLPF at the given year.

12. Given the resource constraints in the Secretariat, the following is proposed to prepare the statistical part of the report:

- 1) Involve the CES Steering Group on statistics for SDGs and its subgroup on communication in preparing the statistical part of the regional report on progress towards SDGs;
- 2) Prepare a statistical annex, similar to the statistical annexes to countries' Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) to HLPF, and build on the experience of countries from the region who have prepared a VNR;
- 3) Use the data available in the global SDG database maintained by UNSD where the data are provided by the international organizations - custodian agencies responsible for SDG indicators;
- 4) However, there is evidence that the data in the global SDG database are often different from the national data on global SDG indicators produced by countries. To avoid creating a competing/duplicative data source to the global database, provide links to existing data resources in countries (national reporting platforms, or a similar tool, that currently exist in about 30 countries).

### III. INPUT REQUESTED FROM THE BUREAU

13. The Bureau is invited to:

- a) **express views on the preparation of the focus event on data and statistics at the UNECE 2019 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;**
- b) **comment on the plans for preparing an annual report on progress towards SDGs in the UNECE region, based on existing statistics and data, starting from 2020, in particular on the approach described in para 12.**