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Implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme 2017

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

Workshop on Reporting and Communicating Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

Summary

The document presents the key outcomes of the Workshop on Reporting and Communicating Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals which took place from 16 to 17 April 2018 in Geneva. The workshop was organized in collaboration with UN Statistics Division under the UN Development Account 10th tranche programme on Statistics and Data.

The Workshop was held back-to-back with the Second Expert Meeting on Statistics for SDGs which took place on 18-19 April 2018.

The report is submitted to the Conference of European Statisticians for information.

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I. Attendance

1. The Workshop on Reporting and Communicating Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals was held on 16-17 April 2018 in Geneva. It was attended by participants from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, and Uzbekistan.

2. The representatives of UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental agencies including International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), and UNECE also attended. A representative from the Centre for Open Data Enterprise (CODE) also attended.

3. The workshop was organized jointly with the UN Statistics Division under the UN Development Account 10th tranche programme on statistics and data that enabled the participation from the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-East Europe (SEE).

II. Organization of the meeting

4. Ms. R. Bielak (Poland) chaired the workshop.

5. The participants adopted the provisional agenda of the Workshop.

6. The following substantive topics were discussed on the basis of presentations:

- Session 1: Recent progress in reporting and communicating statistical follow up for SDGs;
- Session 2: Discussion groups: common challenges in national monitoring and global reporting: practical solutions and priorities for capacity development;
- Session 3: Findings and recommendations of discussion groups;
- Session 4: The big picture: SDG reporting and dissemination;
- Session 5: Implementing SDMX for SDGs: What do NSOs need to know?
- Session 6: Returning to the big picture: modernization of national statistical systems in SDG reporting;
- Session 7: Conclusion: Key decisions and action items for further work.

7. All documents for the meeting are available at: www.unece.org/index.php?id=47905.

III. Summary of the workshop sessions

A. Recent progress in reporting and communicating statistical follow up for SDGs

8. The first session was organized by Ms. S. Frankl (Sweden).

9. UNSD presented outcomes of the Conference on National Reporting Platforms held in January 2018. The Conference aimed to collect feedback from developing countries on the use of national reporting platforms for providing national data for SDGs. A key finding was that countries may choose to use national reporting platforms for different purposes, such as national monitoring, global reporting to custodian agencies, or for both. The format and content of a country's platform depends on its intended use—including whether such a platform is the most efficient way to provide data on SDGs given the national context and priorities. UNSD is preparing a document describing guiding principles to inform countries' plans regarding national reporting platforms. More information about the conference and its outcomes can be found at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/capacity-building/meetings/National_Platforms_for_SDGs.

10. Turkey gave an overview of a pilot on data flows of selected global SDG indicators that a UNECE Task Force carried out in autumn 2017. The pilot tested how the data moves from countries to the custodian agencies, asking both sides to provide feedback regarding data flows for a small set of Tier 1 indicators. The pilot resulted in a number of recommendations to improve the data flows. Several of these recommendations were included in the IAEG-SDG report and the *Guidelines on Data Flows and Global Data Reporting for Sustainable Development Goals* welcomed by UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) in March 2018 as a starting point for developing data flow guidance for SDGs.

11. Subsequently, UNSC has asked IAEG-SDG and the Coordinating Committee of Statistical Activities (CCSA) to prepare complementary implementation guidance for consideration at the 2019 UNSC session. A second UNECE data flow pilot is currently planned that would provide input to this implementation guidance. Countries and custodian agencies were encouraged to join the pilot. See https://statswiki.unece.org/display/SFSDG/Task+Team+on+Data+Flows+for+SDGs for more information.

12. Poland presented the work of the UNECE Task Force on National Reporting Platforms. The Task Force has issued two documents: *National Reporting Platforms: A Practical Guide* (January 2018) and *National Mechanisms for Providing Data on Global SDG Indicators* (January 2018). Both documents are posted on the UNECE public wiki on statistics for SDGs. In addition, the wiki includes an updated list of CES countries using national reporting platforms or similar means, with weblinks where available (See https://statswiki.unece.org/display/SFSDG/National+Activities).

13. UNECE presented a summary of progress in reporting and communicating statistics for SDGs in the countries of the region, looking at developments in different areas following the recommendations in the CES *Road Map on statistics for SDGs*. Using the CES *Road Map* as a guide, the region has made good progress in providing SDG statistics. Overall, data for tier 1 and tier 2 global indicators for UNECE countries are available in the UNSD global SDG database at the expected rate.[1] However, there are notable differences by subregion and by SDG goals. Understanding the nature of these gaps can help identify potential regional priorities for future statistical capacity development.

14. Serbia presented their national reporting platform for SDG statistics. When planning national reporting platforms for SDG purposes, countries may leverage other reporting needs so that data and metadata can be used for more than one reporting purpose. Serbia demonstrated an approach that allows analysing gaps in data availability and preparing metadata and quality reports in efficient ways. Some countries are using DevInfo that was developed in the past for MDG reporting as an additional tool.

15. Some countries have leveraged complementary statistical capacity development activities when engaging in SDG statistical monitoring. For example, Tajikistan (with 19

[1] For Tier 1, this is 50 percent or more; for Tier 2, this is just under that rate.

other countries) participates in a capacity building project for 2016-2021, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and implemented by UNSD. The project facilitates a transparent review of national statistics to make it internationally comparable to permit global aggregation. UNSD carried out an expert mission in the country making an assessment of availability of national statistics for global SDG indicators. With support of UNDP, Tajikistan is preparing a national road map to plan statistical capacity development in relation to global SDG indicators. The results of this work will be integrated in the national statistical development plan and made available on the agency's website.

B. Common challenges in national monitoring and global reporting: practical solutions and priorities for capacity development

16. The session was organized in a format of discussion groups, chaired by Ms. L. Manley (Center for Open Data Enterprises). The topics discussed included:

(a) An NRP—to do what?

(b) National data flows;

(c) Communication of SDG statistics at the national level; and

(d) Identifying common data gaps and statistical capacity development priorities.

C. Findings and recommendations of discussion groups

17. The session was organized and chaired by Mr. Ö. Uysal (Turkey).

18. Discussion groups identified tools and procedures that have been particularly useful in countries' work on statistics for SDGs:

(a) following the UNECE Roadmap;

(b) using the UNECE self-assessment template on availability of global SDG indicators;

(c) setting up national coordinating mechanisms early in the process, such as working groups;

(d) importance of high-level government leadership;

(e) government decisions reflecting policy-makers support for NSOs and their work with SDGs; and

(f) online training materials for setting up NRPs.

19. Discussion groups generally agreed on common challenges. Financing for NRPs and technical assistance is needed. Resource plans are needed to coordinate servers, to train staff on metadata preparation, and to integrate SDMX within existing database systems. Currently, validation of harmonized national statistics is mostly a manual process which requires time. Automated tools could help this process, such as use of satellite imagery. Involving subnational governments and municipalities is important. Media involvement is important, and user-friendly tools for public communication are needed. Coordination with custodian agencies remains a challenge. A core challenge is disaggregation at subnational level. Methodological trainings are needed to support global indicator production, but also more generally in statistical use of administrative registers, including on improving the quality of data. Environmental indicators are a challenge for everyone, as are non-statistical

indicators. Practical guidance on how to leverage non-traditional and big data for use in official statistics for SDGs is also needed.

D. The big picture: SDG reporting and dissemination

20. The session was organized and chaired by Ms. R. Bielak (Poland).

21. The joint presentation by UNECE and UNSD provided an overview and context for the subsequent presentations. Preparation of global statistics for SDGs requires a complex array of data flows, usually beginning with national statistics for global indicators by NSOs and other national data providers, involving harmonization of national statistics by several custodian agencies, and ultimately, collation and reporting by UNSD. Efficient and transparent transmission of statistics and metadata for global SDG indicators requires that NSOs and custodian agencies adopt interoperable statistical data transmission standards, such as SDMX. SDMX can be implemented in incremental steps, and used by non-technicians. Nonetheless, SDMX cannot solve all the data validation challenges countries and custodian agencies face. It is one component of solutions that should be considered by countries and agencies.

22. France presented a simple description of the complex data flow process for producing global SDG indicators, describing the key actors and their roles. The data flows are voluminous and complex: transmitting time series of national statistics and metadata dating back to 2000 for 200+ global indicators from 193 countries to approximately 40 custodian agencies. The indicators should be in accordance with the global metadata, harmonised by custodian agencies, and ultimately sent to UNSD. To ensure the transparency of global statistics, it is important to understand this (still developing) series of relationships.

23. Russian Federation (Natalia Ignatova) provided an overview of the process used to prepare the UN global reports based on the global SDG data. Countries may monitor national progress in achieving the SDGs in various ways. Voluntary National Reviews to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) and supplemental national reports are two ways countries have approached this. In addition, to meet the global reporting commitments described in Agenda 2030, global (and regional) statistics are collected annually and made available in the global SDG database maintained by UNSD. These harmonized and aggregated global statistics are featured in two global SDG progress reports and a statistical annex (coordinated by UNSD) submitted to the HLPF. The official Secretary General's SDG Progress Report covers all 17 goals in the same level of (brief) detail. The Sustainable Development Goals Report, referred to as the "glossy" report, is briefer, and this year will feature narratives only for the goals highlighted in the HLPF meetings.[2] Custodian agencies are asked to submit the statistics that provide basis for the reports according to a published schedule. They are also asked to submit very brief narratives describing overall trends observed. The Statistical Annex is only published online.

E. Implementing SDMX for SDGs: What do NSOs need to know

24. The session was organized and chaired by Ms. J. Park (UNECE).

25. UNSD explained what is Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) and its role in global data compilation. SDMX is an international effort to standardize and modernize the mechanisms and processes for the exchange of statistical data and metadata among international organisations and their member countries. It describes minimal, common data formats which, when applied to data managed in different information systems, allows for aggregation in a common output. In other words, with SDMX data can

[2] In 2018, SDG 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, and 17 will be reviewed in depth at the HLPF.

reside in different kinds of databases but still be gathered in a common way. Using a tool like SDMX is essential for SDGs, where more than 40 custodian agencies, 132 indicators currently with data, and ~460,000 observations must be managed (to date!).

26. SMDX continues to evolve to meet user needs. The MDG SDMX tool allowed for a quick set up but was not user friendly and required manual validation. The SDG SDMX tool is more user-friendly. Like MDG SDMX, it allows for Excel upload (so if NSO data can be exported to Excel, then it can be read into SDMX.). It features the additional dimensions needed for the range of SDG indicators. SDMX for SDGs continues to develop.

27. ILO gave an overview of Data Structure Definitions (DSDs) for SDGs. NSOs and custodian agencies can use SDMX even if they do not understand the underlying details of the code. The example of using wifi versus developing the code for wifi was given. Experts developing SDMX are working out details to make SDMX more suitable for the needs of SDGs, and to make it more user-friendly. NSOs and agencies may start to implement SDMX even as it continues to mature. A simple description of the data exchange process was given using the example of the transportation and processing of oranges to make marmalade.

28. UNSD explained the SDMX Metadata Structure Definitions (MSDs) and their relationship with existing metadata schemas. Just like the data format specifications (known as data structure definitions) for SMDX continue to evolve to meet the needs of SDGs, so too are the metadata format specifications (or metadata structure definitions). Guiding this work are the metadata template requirements from IAEG-SDGs, the metadata structure definition used for MDGs, and global metadata structure definitions. This work continues and new guidance should be available at end 2018.

29. UNSD presented the minimum reporting requirements for the global SDG database. NSOs who are providing national statistics for global reporting using NRPs or other database methods do not need to "start all over" to align with SDMX. A case study with specific guidance was provided on the steps that NSOs can take to make their databases more compatible with SMDX tools as SDMX and SDG processes mature.

F. Returning to the big picture: Modernization of national statistical systems in SDG reporting

30. The session was organized and chaired by Ms. T. Lalor (UNECE).

31. Armenia described its approach to coordination of national statistics for SDGs. Armenia has well advanced in implementing the CES Road Map. An interagency commission and four thematic working groups have been established with the active participation of the National Statistics Service. The country has carried out an assessment of readiness to provide national statistics for SDGs, set up a national reporting platform for SDGs, and identified areas where national and subnational indicators may be developed. Armenia has also identified needs for statistical capacity development in both statistical methodology and in technology for data provision (such as NRPs). Several donor agencies have provided support. Armenia is now planning its approach to communicate statistics for SDGs.

32. The ways in which NSOs respond to data reporting requirements for SDGs (as well as other recent global agreements) can leverage broader movements of making data available to the public. USA presented the country's response to the data aspects of SDGs in the context of the Open Data Charter. Its core principles include: transparency regarding data availability; data are managed in a machine-readable, non-proprietary format; data are managed in public, in real time and are open by default; the origin/metadata are described in detail. This kind of transparency makes data more accessible to users and therefore

responds better to emerging data needs. NSOs can leverage policy interest in open data when developing their approach to providing national statistics for SDGs.

33. Republic of Moldova presented its national approach to SDGs which focused first on national priorities. The policy driven national priorities were viewed in the context of the 2030 Agenda, followed by an assessment of data availability (data ecosystem mapping). The result was a policy driven "nationalization" of SDGs, whereby national coordination process was established, and a set of priority SDG indicators was identified. Subsequent analysis of available data and metadata for these indicators showed several gaps in data and metadata availability. Analysing the data gaps in the context of the European Statistical Code of Practice can help prioritize capacity building needs and strengthen policy level support for NSOs.

G. Conclusion: Key decisions and action items for further work

34. The session was organized and chaired by Ms. K. Orozbaeva (UNDP). Its aim was to identify key action items for further work based on countries experiences.

1. Sub-session A: Key Issues and Potential Solutions for SDG Coordination in EECCA/SEE Countries

Presentation by Mr. K. Alizada (Azerbaijan) and Ms. S. Korajcevic (Bosnia and Herzgovnia)

35. Azerbaijan presented its approach to providing statistics for SDGs which is supported at both the high political level and the institutional level. This allows for coordination of government agencies in setting national priorities for SDG indicators but also for establishing national targets and monitoring national progress. A national reporting platform is under development. Multiple indicator cluster surveys will be launched with support of UNICEF to collect information for 28 indicators across 10 SDGs. To gain support for statistical capacity development for SDGs, it remains essential to communicate with national agencies engaged in statistical production, with policy makers and parliament, and the public at large.

36. Bosnia and Herzgovina observed common challenges in the coordination of SDG statistics. This included coordination between statisticians and policymakers; how to best implement SDGs within the regional context, and how to understand SDG progress in different economies. Strong communication tools are needed to convey the message effectively. It is important to share good practices within the region between countries in similar situations but also to learn from other regions.

37. UNDP concluded the session by noting that substantial progress has been made in providing national statistics for SDGs. Processes for providing data and monitoring progress continue to develop at both the national and global levels. Practical tools, like an SDMX "quick start" guide and identifying global SDG indicators which are not expected to rely upon NSS statistics can be helpful. NSOs can leverage national support for statistical capacity development through close engagement with national policy makers and general public. This may be most effective when SDGs are communicated within the national context and priorities. Custodian agencies can also provide capacity building support. The CES *Road Map on statistics for SDGs* has been helpful in planning and communicating national approaches to statistical monitoring of SDGs in the region; sharing experiences with other regions could be helpful.