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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Conference of European Statisticians

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

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

## **UN Documents and decisions relevant to statistics for SDGs and the regional dimension**

### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

The document provides a short overview of the United Nations decisions related to statistics for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their implications for the work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). It provides references to the decisions of the different UN bodies that relate to:

- Statistics, data and indicators for SDGs;
- Regional dimension of the work: regional follow-up and review of the implementation of the SDG agenda at the policy level, and the regional indicators to inform this process.

The document also refers to the work of the Interagency and Expert Group on SDG indicators and the High-level Group for Cooperation, Partnership and Capacity Building for 2030 Agenda, and notes where the work undertaken under CES can contribute to the global processes.

## I. Decisions on statistics for SDGs

### A. Role of data in Agenda 2030

1. The UN General Assembly resolution 70/1 *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development* (A/RES/70/1)<sup>1</sup> was adopted in September 2015 as a “plan of action for people, planet and prosperity”, seeking to “strengthen universal peace”. The Agenda recognises that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge and indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The agenda contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets.

2. The 2030 Agenda emphasises the importance of data for its implementation:

“Quality, accessible, timely 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. Data and information from existing reporting mechanisms should be used where possible.” (para 48).

“[Follow-up and review processes] 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.” (para 74 (g)).

3. The importance of statistical capacity building is reiterated throughout the document. Two SDG targets address statistical capacity building:

“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”.

“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”.

4. In addition, the need for statistical capacity building is emphasised in paragraphs 48, 57, 57 and 74, for example:

“[Follow-up and review processes] will require enhanced capacity-building support for developing countries, including the strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programmes, particularly in African countries, least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and middle-income countries” (para 74 (h)).

5. To ensure the implementation of 2030 Agenda, countries commit to “engage in a systematic follow-up and review of implementation of this agenda” (para 72). The follow-up and review will be based on data:

“Follow-up and review at the high-level political forum will be informed by an annual progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals to be prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with the United Nations system, based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level.” (para 83).

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

## B. High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

6. The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup> is the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. It oversees the processes at the global level and “will facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up. It will promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies”<sup>3</sup>. HLPF is formed by all State members of the United Nations and State members of specialized agencies.

7. HLPF shall carry out regular reviews, in line with Resolution 67/290. The first meeting will take place on 11-20 July 2016 in New York on the theme “**Ensuring that no one is left behind**”<sup>4</sup>. The 2016 Forum will focus on exchanging experience on the initial steps and approaches taken to implementation and architecture for follow-up and review.

8. HLPF will conduct national reviews and thematic reviews of the implementation of the Agenda, with inputs from other intergovernmental bodies and forums, relevant UN entities, regional processes, major groups and other stakeholders. In 2016, 22 countries will take part in voluntary national reviews at HLPF. The following countries participating in the CES work have volunteered for national reviews in 2016: Colombia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Korea, Switzerland and Turkey.

9. The UN General Assembly is currently discussing the modalities of the follow-up and review process. The UN SG report *Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level*<sup>5</sup> makes proposals on how the global review will be carried out. The report emphasises that high quality data should support the reviews. The following parts in the proposed voluntary common reporting guidelines are related to statistics:

“5 (d) Goals and targets. The review may provide brief information on progress and the status of all Sustainable Development Goals, and critical difficulties encountered in reaching them, making reference, when appropriate, to data provided in the statistical annex (see sect. 8 below). [...] The review may examine the agreed global indicators for those goals and targets identified as priorities. Countries may choose to refer to complementary national and regional indicators.”

“8. Statistical annex. Countries may include an annex with data, using the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators to be proposed by the Statistical Commission as a starting point and adding priority indicators identified at the regional and national levels. They may highlight whether statistics were collected from the national statistical system and pinpoint major gaps in official statistics on indicators.”

10. Currently two co-facilitators (Belize and Denmark) are leading a process<sup>6</sup> to discuss issues addressed in the Secretary-General’s report. Informal consultations are being held with Member States and Stakeholders in March-April 2016. A draft resolution on follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda is expected to be issued in May 2016.

<sup>2</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/290](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/290)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/2016/L.11](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/2016/L.11)

<sup>5</sup> A/70/684, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/follow-up>

<sup>6</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/9884RevisedRoadmapFURprocess.pdf>

## II. Regional level follow-up and review and indicators

### A. The regional dimension in Agenda 2030

11. The 2030 Agenda commits to a systematic follow-up and review operating at the national, subregional, regional and global levels (paras 72 and 73). In addition, the role and importance of regional level is highlighted in several paragraphs:

“We commit to fully engage in conducting regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the subnational, national, regional and global levels. We will draw as far as possible on the existing network of follow-up and review institutions and mechanisms.” (para 77)

“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 [...]. (para 80)

“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.” (para 81)

12. The regional reviews have to be “based on evidence” (para 48), therefore regional and national indicators are also needed:

13. “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, in addition to the outcomes of work undertaken for the development of the baselines for those targets where national and global baseline data does not yet exist”. (para 75).

14. The Agenda 2030 document also refers to thematic reviews (para 85). Some international organizations (e.g. UNESCO) are already developing thematic indicators in addition to the global SDG indicator list.

### B. UN Statistical Commission

15. The UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) agreed on the global SDG indicator list<sup>7</sup> at its 47th session on 8-11 March 2016 “as a practical starting point with the proposed global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as reflected in the list of indicators presented in annex IV of the report, subject to future technical refinement” (Decision 1 (d)). The list will be submitted for adoption also to ECOSOC (in June 2016) and to UN General Assembly (in September 2016).

16. The Statistical Commission further confirmed the need for regional indicators:

“[The Statistical Commission] emphasised 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

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<sup>7</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-IAEG-SDGs-E-Revised.pdf>

and subnational levels of monitoring will be developed at the regional and national levels.” (Decision 1(i)).

17. The Statistical Commission also noted the need to develop a Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which will provide a roadmap for the modernization and strengthening of statistical systems for the 2030 Agenda. This Action Plan should take into account existing regional roadmaps (Decision 2(e)).

### **C. UNECE Executive Committee**

18. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is currently discussing the modalities of review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda in UNECE region. The UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) has held several informal discussions to outline the regional follow-up and review process for SDGs. On 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016, EXCOM will hold the ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD)<sup>8</sup> to provide input to HLPF at the global level. This meeting is expected to discuss in more detail the follow-up and review mechanisms in the UNECE region.

### **D. Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators**

19. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs)<sup>9</sup> developed an indicator framework and list of indicators for monitoring the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda which was approved by UNSC. 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<sup>10</sup>.

20. The IAEG-SDG members from the UNECE region are: Armenia, Canada, France, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Russian Federation and Sweden. Mexico, who is member of the CES Bureau, is co-chair of the Group.

21. IAEG-SDGs has met three times. The last meeting held on 30 March – 1 April in Mexico discussed the Tier system of the indicators, procedures for the methodological review of indicators, development of global reporting mechanisms (including entities responsible for compile data and data flows from national to international levels) and the work plan and next steps.

22. The IAEG-SDG report to UNSC<sup>11</sup> “considered the relationship between the global indicators and the indicators for regional, national and subnational and thematic monitoring. It is expected that the global indicators will form the core of all other sets of indicators, especially considering that the discussions on the global indicators took into account some of the experience with regional, national and subnational and thematic monitoring. However, additional and in some cases different indicators might be used for regional, national and subnational levels of monitoring. These indicators will be developed by Member States. Indicators for thematic monitoring are already being developed in a number of areas.” (para 23).

23. At its first meeting in June 2015 in New York, IAEG-SDGs started discussion on interlinkages between Goals and targets. However, there has been extremely limited time to

<sup>8</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2016/ece>

<sup>9</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>

<sup>10</sup> [http://unstats.un.org/files/IAEG-SDGs%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20\(April%202015\).pdf](http://unstats.un.org/files/IAEG-SDGs%20-%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20(April%202015).pdf)

<sup>11</sup> E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1

discuss these issues as the main focus was on agreeing on the global indicator list. At its 3rd meeting on 30 March - 1 April in Mexico City, IAEG-SDGs decided to set up a working group on interlinkages between SDG indicators. The work of the Task Force on adjusting the CES framework to SDGs can provide input to the IAEG-SDG working group on interlinkages.

24. In addition to the working group on interlinkages, a IAEG-SDG subgroup on data disaggregation and working groups on SDMX and geospatial data are being set up.

25. The next IAEG-SDGs meeting is planned to take place in autumn 2016.

## **E. High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for 2030 Agenda**

26. The aim of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for 2030 Agenda<sup>12</sup> (HLG) is to provide strategic leadership for the SDG implementation process concerning statistical monitoring and reporting. The group aims to establish a global partnership for sustainable development data, and should promote national ownership, address the need for funding of statistical capacity building, and advise on opportunities of the data revolution and make recommendations on common data infrastructures.

27. The members of the Group from UNECE region are: Denmark, Hungary (co-chair), Italy, Kazakhstan, Switzerland and United States. The Group has met four times. The next meeting is planned for end of May/early June 2016.

28. A joint subgroup of IAEG-SDG and HLG members is set up to work on identifying immediate statistical capacity building priorities for the implementation of SDG indicators.

29. HLG is developing a Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which will provide a roadmap for the modernization and strengthening of statistical systems for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The road map is planned to be presented to UNSC in February/March 2017. HLG is also organising a UN World Data Forum at the end of 2016.

30. The Global Action Plan will address all aspects of coordination, production and use of data for sustainable development. The outline of the Action Plan includes six strategic areas: (1) coordination and strategic leadership (including strengthening the national statistical systems and increasing the coordination role of NSOs); (2) innovation and modernisation of national statistical systems; (3) strengthening basic statistical activities and programmes; (4) dissemination and use of sustainable development data; (5) multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development data; and (6) mobilising resources for and coordinating statistical capacity building.

31. The CES Road Map on Statistics for SDGs will contribute to the Global Action Plan.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/hlg/>