



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 April 2019

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

67th plenary session

Paris, 26-28 June 2019

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

Principles for rotation of members from the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe region of Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals indicators and High-Level Group on Partnership, Cooperation and Capacity Building for the 2030 Agenda

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The document presents the principles for rotation of members from the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe (UNECE) region of Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and High-Level Group on Partnership, Cooperation and Capacity Building for the 2030 Agenda (HLG-PCCB).

According to the terms of reference of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission, their members are nominated through existing regional mechanisms. For the UNECE region, this is the Conference of European Statisticians. The CES Bureau discussed the principles of rotation of members from the UNECE region in these two groups in October 2017.

The draft principles were discussed at the CES plenary session in June 2018. The Conference agreed that some transparent principles for rotation are needed, requested the Secretariat to reflect the comments from discussion and submit the Principles for final approval to the CES Bureau. The document presents the updated guidance and principles approved by the CES Bureau in October 2018. The Principles are submitted to the Conference for information.



I. Introduction

1. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and the High-level group on partnership, cooperation and capacity building for the 2030 Agenda (HLG-PCCB) were set up by the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) in March 2015. According to the terms of reference (TOR) for both groups, their members are nominated through existing regional mechanisms; for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region, this is the Conference of European Statisticians (CES)¹. The CES Bureau, as the steering body of the Conference, makes the proposal and consults it with CES.
2. The first members of the groups were nominated in 2015 for an initial period of two years, after which some of the members were expected to be rotated. The first round of rotation took place in spring 2017, and the next round will be in 2019.
3. The CES Bureau discussed in October 2017 the criteria for the rotation of members of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB from the UNECE region. The Bureau noted that:
 - (a) The principles for the rotation of members in these groups should be agreed and made public;
 - (b) The work should be open and transparent. It is very important to keep non-member countries informed about the discussions in these groups. The IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB members should consult with other countries from their sub-region;
 - (c) It is important to maximise representation from the different sub-regions, taking into account that there is an overlapping membership between some Regional Commissions.
4. The Bureau emphasized that there should be common principles at the global level, and that the issue should be also brought to the attention of UN Statistics Division (UNSD) and the Statistical Commission (UNSC).
5. The Bureau continued the discussion at its meeting in February 2018. The Bureau emphasised that the rotation of members in these groups should be done in a transparent and professional way and acknowledged that regions may differ in terms of their conditions for such rotation.
6. The principles were presented to the CES 2018 plenary session for approval. The Conference agreed that transparent principles for rotation are needed. The Conference emphasised the importance of having a good balance between keeping the continuity of the work and giving an opportunity for new countries to be involved. Several possible solutions were proposed, such as staggering the terms of members in the groups so that the changes would take place at different times, establishing a mechanism for a smooth transfer of knowledge between the outgoing and incoming members, etc.
7. The tasks of the two groups are different and the rotation principles may also differ. It was emphasised that the members of the groups should communicate and consult with other countries from their subregion. Several members underscored the need for flexibility in implementing these principles.
8. The updated principles reflecting the suggestions by the CES 2018 plenary session are presented in the next section. The CES Bureau approved these principles in October 2018.
9. Background information on the rules and process of rotation of the IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB members is presented in annex I and the UN Regional Groupings in annex II.

¹ E/CN.3/2017/2 (Terms of Reference for IAEG-SDGs), para 2; E/CN.3/2017/3 (Terms of Reference for HLG-PCCB), para 3

II. Rules and guidance for the selection and rotation of members of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB

A. Requirements established in terms of reference of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB², approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission

(a) Members of the groups will be nominated through existing regional mechanisms (for UNECE region: the Conference of European Statisticians);

(b) Countries cannot be simultaneously members of the HLG-PCCB and IAEG-SDGs³;

(c) There are 27 members in IAEG-SDGs and 22 members in HLG-PCCB;

(d) The respective regional mechanisms will ensure that a certain number of members will be rotated for continuity of the work of the group as outlined below:

(i) For IAEG-SDGs: “A total of nine members will be rotated: two members from Eastern, Middle and Southern and Western Africa; one member from Northern Africa and Western Asia; two members from Central, Eastern, Southern, South-Eastern Asia and Oceania; two members from the Caribbean and Central and South America; and two members from Eastern Europe, North America and Northern, Southern and Western Europe”;

(ii) For HLG-PCCB: “two members will be replaced from each region where there are four or five members, and one will be replaced where there are three or fewer members from the regions.” Currently, there are five members from Africa, two from Western Asia, four from Asia, one from the Pacific, two from the Caribbean, three from Latin America, one from Eastern Europe and four from Europe and North America.

(e) For IAEG-SDGs, at the time of membership rotation, one Co-Chair is expected to step down and is invited to serve for an additional term of two years as a member. For the HLG-PCCB, one or both of the two Co-Chairs are expected to rotate every two years. However, when they step down they are invited to serve for an additional term of two years as members.

B. Recommendations for the rotation of membership at the global level (based on a guidance document by UNSD in 2015)

(a) Each Member State is considered in only one regional grouping;

(b) Selection should reflect an equitable representation of developed and developing countries and take into account the appropriate representation of countries in special situations, including Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States;

(c) Regional compositions should be defined based on the most recent Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use (M49)⁴. In addition, the geopolitical grouping of the United Nations Regional Groups of Member States⁵ should also be considered, as well as the composition of the UN Regional Commissions;

² E/CN.3/2017/2 (Terms of Reference for IAEG-SDGs) and E/CN.3/2017/3 (Terms of Reference for HLG-PCCB)

³ Except for the Chair of the UN Statistical Commission who is an ex-officio member of both groups

⁴ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>

⁵ <http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml>

However, Regional Commissions may choose to adjust, as appropriate, the composition of the geographic sub-regions to be represented as well as additional geopolitical groupings within a sub-region;

(d) Members are expected to be active, attend all meetings and consult regularly with the countries of their sub-region;⁶

(e) Members who are currently actively involved in key areas of work that are already well advanced or chair some of the sub-groups should remain as members to complete their work.

C. Principles of rotation in the UNECE region, approved by the CES Bureau

(a) Use the geographic groupings defined in M49 as the first criterion for deciding which Regional Commission coordinates the nomination/rotation, and the membership of Regional Commissions as the second criterion;

(b) Encourage a maximum membership of three (two-year) terms. A country may become a member of a group again after a break of two years. However, this guidance should be implemented with flexibility to account for involvement in ongoing group work and national contexts;

(c) The principles guiding rotation should be implemented taking into account the different objectives and requirements of each group. For example, technical expertise is a more important selection factor for IAEG membership, whereas experience in strategic planning is a more important selection factor for HLG membership. Geographic representation, effective participation in group activities and meetings, and continuity of the work are important considerations;

(d) To ensure a smooth transition, members who served two (two-year) terms are anticipated to rotate off unless:

(i) They are a co-chair (in which case, they may serve as a member for a third term); or

(ii) They are substantively leading a recognized task on behalf of their group and rotation off would have a negative effect on the work.

(e) The rotation of membership should be implemented in a staggered way to minimize disruption of ongoing work and preserve the acquired knowledge base of each group.

(f) Countries rotating into and out of each group should facilitate smooth transitions by:

(i) During the transition process, countries rotating out should remain copied on electronic consultations with their counterpart countries rotating in;

(ii) Countries rotating out should attend the scheduled next meeting of their former group as observers, so as to provide background information to the country rotating in;

(iii) Countries rotating into a group are responsible for becoming familiar with the overall progress and current work efforts of the group. The countries who are members of the groups should represent their respective sub-region and consult regularly with other countries of the sub-region.

(g) Members of the groups can rotate also within the 2-year cycle of membership, provided that there is agreement from the country rotating off and the incoming country, and bearing in mind the regional representativeness;

⁶ Report of IAEG-SDGs to UNSC, 2016, E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1, para 3

(h) Plan the rotation in advance, for example for the Secretariat to maintain a list of countries that are planning to rotate off, and countries who are interested of becoming members of the groups;

(i) Ensure a balanced representation of subgroups within the regional groups.

Annex I

I. Rules and principles for the election and rotation of members as approved by the UN Statistical Commission and communicated/advised by the UN Statistics Division

A. Rules included in the Terms of Reference of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB

1. IAEG-SDGs “consists of 27 representatives of national statistical offices and one ex-officio member and also includes, as observers, representatives of regional commissions and regional and international agencies, to provide important technical advice and support as needed.”⁷
2. HLG-PCCB “will comprise 22 member representatives of national statistical offices, with balanced geographical representation following broadly the distribution in the Inter-Agency and Expert Group.”⁸ Furthermore, “The High-level Group can include, as issue partners, representatives of regional commissions and regional and international agencies as well as other specific representatives as decided by the members of the High-level Group. The High-level Group will seek inputs from countries that are not members of the High-level Group, through their respective regional mechanisms.”⁹
3. The TOR of both groups include as criteria for the membership and rotation equitable geographic distribution and technical expertise. The TOR of IAEG-SDGs also notes that “The respective regional mechanisms will ensure that a certain number of members will be rotated for continuity of the work of the group.”¹⁰
4. It is also considered preferable that members do not serve concurrently in both groups.¹¹
5. For IAEG-SDGs, there is an additional condition that the group should include members of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. In the UNECE region, the following countries are classified as Landlocked Developing Countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
6. The terms of reference of both groups include footnotes on the number of members to be rotated at each round, as follows:
 - (a) IAEG-SDGs – “A total of nine members are foreseen to be rotated: two members from Eastern, Middle and Southern and Western Africa; one member from Northern Africa and Western Asia; two members from Central, Eastern, Southern, South-Eastern Asia and Oceania; two members from the Caribbean and Central and South America; and two members from Eastern Europe, North America and Northern, Southern and Western Europe.”¹²
 - (b) HLG-PCCB – “two members will be replaced from each region where there are four or five members, and one will be replaced where there are three or fewer members from the regions.”¹³ In this context, the regions are: Africa, Western Asia, Asia, the Pacific, the Caribbean, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Europe and North America. According

⁷ TOR of IAEG-SDG, para 2

⁸ TOR of HLG-PCCB, para 3

⁹ TOR of HLG-PCCB, para 4

¹⁰ TOR of IAEG-SDG, para 2

¹¹ TOR of HLG-PCCB, para 3 and TOR of IAEG-SDGs, para 3

¹² TOR of IAEG-SDGs, footnote c

¹³ The footnote b in TOR of HLG-PCCB says “Currently, there are five members from Africa, two from Western Asia, four from Asia, one from the Pacific, two from the Caribbean, three from Latin America, one from Eastern Europe and four from Europe and North America.”

to this guidance, the one member from Eastern Europe should be rotated (as there is only one member for this region), and two members from Europe and North America.

7. There are additional conditions for the co-Chairs. For IAEG-SDGs, at the time of membership rotation, one Co-Chair is expected to step down and is invited to serve for an additional term of two years as a member. For HLG-PCCB, one or both of the two Co-Chairs are expected to rotate every two years. However, when they step down they are invited to serve for an additional term of two years as members.

B. Geographic representation

8. The TOR of both groups include the requirement of equitable geographic distribution.

9. According to the guidance received from UNSD in 2015, the most recent definitions of Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use (M49)¹⁴ should be used for defining the geographical regions. In addition, the geopolitical grouping of the United Nations Regional Groups of Member States¹⁵ and the composition of the UN Regional Commissions should also be taken into account (see Annex II).

10. Regional groups defined by the M49 breakdown seem to be the primary consideration for regional representation as the membership of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB is presented according to these regions in the reports to UN Statistical Commission and on the IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB websites.

11. The above-mentioned geographical groupings imply a different break-down of membership and do not coincide with the members of the UN Regional Commissions. In practice, the membership of the Regional Commissions plays an important role as the nomination and rotation process of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB members is done through the regional statistical committees. This poses two types of challenges in organizing the selection and rotation:

(a) There are countries which are members of several regional commissions. For example, a number of countries are members of both UNECE and ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan;

In 2015, following the advice of UNSD, the selection of countries from Central Asia for IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB was coordinated by ESCAP. Russian Federation was included in the Eastern Europe group for which the elections were coordinated by UNECE.

(b) There are countries that are not members of the Regional Commission that is asked to nominate members from the regional groups that they belong to. Of the UNECE member countries, this situation concerns Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Israel and Turkey. According to regional groups defined in M49 they belong to Western Asia for which the election and membership is coordinated by ESCWA (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia). However, these countries are not members of ESCWA.

12. To alleviate this situation, in 2015 when the members to both groups were elected, UNSD advised that "(...) in consultation with its Member States, and in order to better reflect existing working mechanisms, Regional Commissions may choose to adjust, as appropriate, the composition of the geographic sub-regions to be represented in the IAEG-SDGs. Also, the Regional Commissions, in consultation with their Member States, may decide to consider additional geopolitical groupings to facilitate the selection of countries within one sub-region."¹⁶

13. In 2015, CES was asked to propose the members for IAEG-SDGs as follows:

- 1 member from Eastern Europe

¹⁴ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>

¹⁵ <http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml>

¹⁶ UNSD note on the IAEG-SDGs Membership, 2015, page 1, footnote 1

- 2 members from Southern Europe
- 3 members from North America and Northern and Western Europe.

14. For ease of reference, the geographical regions according to the Standard Country Area Codes for Statistical Use (M49) and the United Nations Regional Groups of Member States are presented in Annex II.

15. For the rotation procedure to be fair and transparent, it is recommended to clarify which countries each Regional Commission should consider in the rotation process to ensure that each country would be considered for the membership only once, and that all countries would have an opportunity to be considered through a Regional Commission where they are members.

16. In addition, it is important to ensure a balanced representation within the regional groups. This could be pursued at the CES Bureau level through its selection process, with informal consultation with other Regional Commissions as appropriate.

17. For example, currently the region of Southern Europe is underrepresented in both IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB. And none of the UNECE member countries that belong to Western Asia according to M49 are members of either IAEG or HLG.

C. Technical expertise and continuity of work

18. To ensure technical expertise and continuity of the work, as required in TOR of both groups, there are some additional considerations to be taken into account when proposing new members for the IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB, as follows:

- The membership implies representing the respective sub-region and consulting with the countries of their sub-region
- The countries who are members are expected to be active and attend all meetings
- To ensure continuity of work, the members who are currently actively involved in key work areas and/or chair some of the sub-groups should remain in the groups, as otherwise the work would suffer from changes.

19. A prerequisite for membership is an interest from a particular country to be a member, and readiness to devote the necessary resources. Participation at meetings is on self-funded basis¹⁷ and there is considerable workload involved both in preparation for the meetings and in-between the meetings. Several sub-groups are actively working during the period between the meetings.

20. It is important to have a mechanism for the countries that are members of the IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB to consult with other countries of their sub-region, so that the groups' members could effectively represent their sub-regions, and that the views of all interested countries would be taken into account.

II. Process

21. In 2015, the UNECE secretariat consulted via e-mail with all CES members from the region on their interest to become a member of either of the groups. The interest expressed by countries, equitable geographic representation, as well as countries' involvement in the work related to measuring sustainable development were taken into account in making the proposal for membership.

22. In 2017, a similar process was followed. The countries who were members at that time were asked whether they would like to continue. All other CES countries were asked about their interest to become a member. The proposal for rotation was prepared based on expressed

¹⁷ A limited number of developing countries that are members of the Group may receive funding to support their participation in the meetings, if available. TOR for IAEG-SDGs, para 5.

interests, the active involvement of countries in different work streams of IAEG-SDGs, and the number of available places due to rotation.

23. The membership of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB from UNECE region is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

UNECE member countries in IAEG-SDGs and HGL-PCCB

<i>Geographic group (M49)</i>	<i>2015-2017</i>		<i>2017-2019</i>	
	IAEG-SDGs	HLG-PCCB	IAEG-SDGs	HLG-PCCB
Eastern Europe	Russian Federation	Hungary	Russian Federation Belarus	Hungary
Southern Europe		Italy		Italy
North America and Northern and Western Europe	Canada	Denmark	Canada	Denmark
	France	Switzerland	France	Switzerland
	Germany	United States	Germany	United States
	Netherlands		Netherlands	
	Sweden		Sweden	
Western Asia	Armenia			
Central, Eastern, Southern and South-Eastern Asia	Kyrgyzstan	Kazakhstan	Tajikistan	Kazakhstan

24. In the first rotation round in 2017, two members from the UNECE region were replaced in IAEG-SDGs: Belarus replaced Armenia, and Tajikistan replaced Kyrgyzstan. The HLG-PCCB membership from the UNECE region remained the same.

25. The CES Bureau considered desirable to have a longer-term view on the possible members for the groups and plan the rotation in advance. A transparent and equitable rotation procedure provides opportunities for a wider number of countries to participate in the work. It encourages more active involvement of current members but also distributes the work burden.

26. To assist countries in preparing for a smooth transition and give sufficient time to new countries who may be interested in joining, it may be helpful to post the schedule of membership over time and denote the positions that are less likely to rotate next term given task obligations (such as leadership on a task or transitioning from a co-chair to member). Table 1 could serve as a starting point.

27. Furthermore, it would be helpful to use consistent regional groupings for both IAEG-SDG and HLG-PCCB membership, and to clarify the representation of different regions and subregions in HLG-PCCB (as with its 22 members it is smaller than IAEG-SDGs with 27 members).

Annex II

UNECE member countries, M49 and the UN Regional groupings

<i>UNECE member countries</i>	<i>UNECE countries in the geographic groupings defined by M49</i>		<i>UNECE countries in the UN Regional groups</i>	
(a)		(b)	(c)	
Albania	Eastern Europe	Belarus	Eastern European Group	
Andorra		Bulgaria		Albania
Armenia		Czechia		Armenia
Austria		Hungary		Azerbaijan
Azerbaijan		Poland		Belarus
Belarus		Republic of Moldova		Bosnia and Herzegovina
Belgium		Romania		Bulgaria
Bosnia and Herzegovina		Russian Federation		Croatia
Bulgaria		Slovakia		Czechia
Canada		Ukraine		Estonia
Croatia		Albania		Georgia
Cyprus		Andorra		Hungary
Czechia		Bosnia and Herzegovina		Latvia
Denmark		Croatia		Lithuania
Estonia	Greece	Montenegro		
Finland	Holy See	North Macedonia		
France	Italy	Poland		
Georgia	Malta	Republic of Moldova		
Germany	Montenegro	Romania		
Greece	North Macedonia	Russian Federation		
Hungary	Portugal	Serbia		
Iceland	San Marino	Slovakia		
Ireland	Serbia	Slovenia		
Israel	Slovenia	Ukraine		
Italy	Spain	Andorra		
Kazakhstan	Canada	Austria		
Kyrgyzstan	United States of America	Belgium		
Latvia	Denmark	Canada		
Liechtenstein	Estonia	Denmark		
Lithuania	Finland	Finland		
Luxembourg	Iceland	France		
Malta	Ireland	Germany		
Monaco	Latvia	Greece		
Montenegro	Lithuania	Iceland		
Netherlands	Norway	Ireland		
North Macedonia	Sweden	Israel		
Norway	United Kingdom	Italy		
Poland	Austria	Liechtenstein		
Portugal	Belgium	Luxembourg		
Republic of Moldova	France	Malta		
Romania	Germany	Monaco		
Russian Federation	Liechtenstein	Netherlands		
San Marino	Luxembourg	Norway		
Serbia	Monaco	Portugal		
Slovak Republic	Netherlands	San Marino		
Slovenia	Switzerland	Spain		
		Sweden		

<i>UNECE member countries</i>	<i>UNECE countries in the geographic groupings defined by M49</i>		<i>UNECE countries in the UN Regional groups</i>
(a)		(b)	(c)
Spain	Western Asia	Armenia	Switzerland
Sweden		Azerbaijan	Turkey
Switzerland		Cyprus	United Kingdom
Tajikistan		Georgia	United States of America
Turkey		Israel	Cyprus
Turkmenistan		Turkey	Kazakhstan
Ukraine		Central Asia	Kazakhstan
United Kingdom	Kyrgyzstan		Tajikistan
United States of America	Tajikistan		Turkmenistan
Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan		Uzbekistan
	Uzbekistan		