

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)**

Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, *The future we want*, includes some important references to statistics, data and information, and provides mandates to regional commissions in the area of statistics. The document calls for concrete actions to improve data, information and assessment of progress in sustainable development.
2. Furthermore, as an outcome of Rio+20, a process has been initiated to establish Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to replace the Millennium Development Goals that have a target date in 2015.
3. To facilitate the discussion by the Bureau, the secretariat has extracted from the Rio+20 outcome document the references that can be considered relevant to the work of official statisticians. The references are grouped under 2 headings in Section II:
 - a) Sustainable development and importance of data for evidence based decision making;
 - b) Thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues.
4. An overview of the process of developing the post-2015 goals (Sustainable Development Goals) and the relevant references are provided in Section III.
5. **The Bureau is invited to discuss the implications of the outcome of Rio+20 for official statistics and for the future work and priorities of the Conference of European Statisticians.**

**II. REFERENCES TO STATISTICS, DATA AND INFORMATION IN THE
RIO+20 OUTCOME DOCUMENT**

A. Sustainable development and importance of data for evidence based decision making

6. The Rio+ 20 outcome document underlines the importance of reliable statistical data and evidence-based decision making. In particular, the report emphasises the need to provide data on all three pillars of sustainable development: environmental, economic and social.

7. The main message targeted at the statistical community is in para 38:

“38. We recognize the **need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product** in order to better inform policy decisions, and in this regard we request the United Nations Statistical Commission, in consultation with relevant United Nations system entities and other relevant organizations, to **launch a programme of work in this area, building on existing initiatives.**”

8. Further importance of data and information is underlined in Part IV “Institutional framework for sustainable development”:

“76. We therefore resolve to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development, which will, inter alia: ..

(g) Promote the science-policy interface through **access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development**, building on existing mechanisms, as appropriate; in this regard, strengthen participation of all countries in international sustainable development processes and capacity-building especially for developing countries, including in conducting their own monitoring and assessments;”

“98. ... we recognize that **integrated social, economic and environmental data** and information, as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation, are important in decision-making processes.”

“99. We encourage action at the regional, national, subnational and local levels to **promote access to information...**”

“100. We emphasize that ... the United Nations regional commissions ... have a significant role to play in promoting a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. ... we urge these institutions to **prioritize sustainable development through**, inter alia, more efficient and effective **capacity-building**, development and implementation of regional agreements and arrangements as appropriate, and **exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned**. ... We encourage the enhancement of the United Nations regional commissions in their respective capacities to support Member States in implementing sustainable development. ...”

“104. ... We recognize that **goals, targets and indicators, including gender sensitive indicators, are valuable** in measuring and accelerating progress. ...”

B. Thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues

9. The Rio+20 outcome document provides for follow-up activities in 30 thematic areas. Some of the areas include specific references to statistics, data and information. In other areas the need for better information is not explicitly mentioned but it can be expected that international work on the listed topics will also create data needs.

10. Two important cross-cutting initiatives are **green economy** and **sustainable consumption and production**.

Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

“63. We acknowledge that it will be important to take into account the **opportunities and challenges**, as well as the **costs and benefits, of green economy policies** in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, using the best available **scientific data and analysis**. ...”

“66. ... we invite the United Nations system, in cooperation with relevant donors and international organizations, to coordinate and provide information upon request on: ...

(d) **Methodologies for evaluation of policies on green economy** in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;”

Sustainable consumption and production patterns

11. At Rio+20 Summit, the Governments adopted the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns (document A/CONF.216/58). The governments also invited the General Assembly, at its sixty-seventh session (starting in September 2012), to designate a Member State body to take any necessary steps to fully operationalize the framework. UNEP will provide the secretariat of the framework.

12. The framework includes some references to data (from document A/CONF.216/5):

“3. The functions of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns should include: ..

(l) ... taking into account **available information on the root causes of current consumption patterns**, as appropriate, and on the **costs and benefits** related to the implementation **of sustainable consumption and production**, particularly with regard to the impact on employment and poverty;”

“7. Sustainable consumption and production programmes included in the 10-year framework .. should be in accordance with the following criteria: ..

(h) Consider the use of a mix of efficient instruments such as education, training and **data collection**, as well as research activities in each programme, as appropriate.”

Full and productive employment, decent work for all and social protection

“62. ... We invite governments to improve knowledge and **statistical capacity on job trends, developments and constraints** and **integrate relevant data into national statistics**, with the support of relevant United Nations agencies within their mandates.

“154. ... we acknowledge the importance of efforts to promote the **exchange of information and knowledge on decent work for all and job creation, including green jobs initiatives and related skills**, and to facilitate the integration of relevant data into national economic and employment policies.”

Environment

13. Environmental issues are represented by several themes (chemicals and waste, forests, oceans and seas, water and sanitation, biodiversity and ecosystems). The Rio+20 report calls for strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). One of its tasks is to:

“88. (e) Disseminate and share **evidence-based environmental information**, and raise public awareness on critical, as well as emerging, environmental issues;”

“90. We stress the need for the continuation of a regular review of **the state of the Earth’s changing environment and its impact on human well-being.**”

Food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture

“117. We underline the importance of timely, accurate and transparent **information** in helping to address excessive **food price volatility ...**”

Sustainable cities

“136. We note that sustainable urban planning benefits from the involvement of multiple stakeholders as well as from **full use of information and sex-disaggregated data, including on demographic trends, income distribution and informal settlements. ...**”

Disaster risk reduction

“187. ... We further recognize the importance of comprehensive hazard and risk assessments, and knowledge- and information sharing, including **reliable geospatial information. ...**“

Desertification, land degradation and drought

“208. We stress the importance of the further development and implementation of scientifically based, sound and socially inclusive **methods and indicators for monitoring and assessing the extent of desertification, land degradation and drought,...**”

“209. We reiterate the **need for cooperation through the sharing of climate and weather information and forecasting and early warning systems** related to desertification, land degradation and drought, as well as to dust storms and sandstorms, at the global, regional and subregional levels.”

Technology

“274. We recognize the importance of space-technology-based data, in situ monitoring and reliable **geospatial information** for sustainable development policymaking, programming and project operations.”

Capacity-building

14. The Rio+ 20 Conference calls for strengthening the institutional framework for monitoring sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental dimensions by means of capacity building:

“274. ...We recognize the **need to support developing countries in their efforts to collect environmental data.**”

“277. We emphasize the need for **enhanced capacity-building for sustainable development** ... We reiterate the importance of human resource development, including training, the exchange of experiences and expertise, knowledge transfer and technical assistance for capacity-building, which involves strengthening institutional capacity, including planning, management and monitoring capacities.”

“279. We encourage the participation and representation of men and women scientists and researchers from developing and developed countries in processes related to **global environmental and sustainable development assessment and monitoring**, with the purpose of enhancing national capabilities and the quality of research for policy- and decision-making processes.”

“280. We invite all relevant agencies of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations to **support developing countries** ...”

Other thematic and cross-sectoral areas

15. The other areas listed in the outcome document that do not include specific references to data or information are: poverty eradication, energy, health and population, sustainable transport, climate change, education, finance, gender equality and women’s empowerment, institutional framework for sustainable development, mining, mountains, small island developing states, sustainable tourism and trade, Africa. While there were no explicit references to improving data or information in these areas, the relevant policies will need data also for their monitoring and evaluation.

Strengthening intergovernmental arrangements for sustainable development

16. The outcome document emphasises the need for an improved and more effective institutional framework for sustainable development. It is planned to establish a high-level political forum, building on the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently replacing the Commission. The high level forum could:

“85. (e) Follow up and **review progress in the implementation of sustainable development** commitments ...;

(k) Strengthen the science-policy interface through review of documentation, **bringing together dispersed information and assessments**, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing assessments;

(l) Enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels and contribute to **strengthening ongoing capacity-building for data collection and analysis** in developing countries.”

III. ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17. One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference was the agreement by Member States to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post 2015 development agenda.

18. The relevant text from the Rio+20 outcome document is in paras 245-251:

“248. We resolve to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals that is open to all stakeholders ...”

“250. We recognize that progress towards the **achievement of the goals needs to be assessed by targets and indicators**, while taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and levels of development.

251. We recognize that there is a **need for global, integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development**. In this regard, we request the relevant bodies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to support the regional economic commissions in collecting and compiling national inputs in order to inform this global effort. We further commit to mobilizing financial resources and capacity-building, particularly for developing countries, to achieve this endeavour.”

19. The process of establishing the Sustainable Development Goals is currently underway and is developing through three main streams:

- a) UN system Task Team on the post-2015 development agenda, set up by the UN Secretary General in January 2012;
- b) Intergovernmental Open Working group (OWG) of member countries, established by the UN General Assembly in September 2012;
- c) High-level panel appointed by the UN Secretary General.

UN System Task Team

20. The UN system Task Team (UNTT) on the post-2015 development agenda was set up by the UN Secretary-General in January 2012 (that is, before the Rio+20 Summit took place). It is co-chaired by the UN department of economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the UN Development programme (UNDP) and brings together senior technical experts from more than 60 UN system entities. A key objective for the UNTT is to help ensure coherence between the work on defining the sustainable development goals (SDGs) agreed upon at Rio+20 and that of the post-2015 UN development agenda. This reflects the widely recognized need to move towards one unified development agenda for the post-2015 period, with sustainable development at its centre. The UNTT terms of reference include:

- Assessing on-going efforts within the UN system;

- Consulting external stakeholders such as civil society, academia and the private sector; and
- Development of a system-wide vision and road map to support the deliberations on the post-2015 UN development agenda.

21. The Task Team held several conferences and submitted its first report *Realizing the Future We Want* to the Secretary-General in June 2012 (available at: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTTreport.pdf). The report provided an assessment of key development challenges of the 21st century and proposed initial ideas about possible post-2015 UN development agenda.

22. The report recommended that new goals should build on the strengths of the MDGs, apply to all countries, and be based on the fundamental principles of human rights, equality, and sustainability. As part of this effort, the UNTT also prepared 18 comprehensive think pieces on issues related to: countries with special needs; culture; disaster risk and resilience; education and skills; employment; hunger and malnutrition; governance and development; health; human rights; inequalities; science, technology and innovation; macroeconomic stability, inclusive growth and employment; migration; peace and security; population dynamics; social protection; sustainable development; and sustainable urbanization.

23. Three inter-agency technical support teams have been established under the umbrella of the UNTT to provide input to the process: Post 2015 UNTT Working Group on Global Partnership for development, Post 2015 UNTT Working Group on Monitoring and Target Setting; and Technical Support Team on SDGs (UNECE has nominated representatives to all 3 groups).

Open Working Group

24. The UN General Assembly intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG) was established at the opening of the 67th session of the General Assembly (18 September 2012). The Open Working Group consists of 30 UN member country representatives nominated by different regions. A key objective of this group is to ensure that sustainable development goals are an integral part of the post-2015 development framework. The Open Working Group should produce a report for the General Assembly during its 68th session (September 2013-September 2014).

25. The membership of the OWG is currently being discussed. It is not yet finally decided how many seats will be allocated to different regions (the proposal is: 7 seats each for Africa and Asia, 6 seats for Latin America and Caribbean, and 5 seats each for Western Europe and Other States, and the Eastern Europe). It is also being discussed how to interpret the word “open” and how non-members could participate in the group. The current proposal is that the 30 countries will be core members, acting as a steering group, and all member states should have equal rights to contribute and participate in the discussions.

26. To seek input from national governments to the OWG, a questionnaire related to the development of SDGs has been sent out to countries (the deadline for replies was 21 October).

27. The three UNTT technical support teams mentioned above will provide support to the work of the OWG.

Deliverables of the Open Working Group	Date for completion	Comments
Initial inputs to the Open Working Groups on SDGs: i) consultations with governments ii) report with initial inputs to OWG iii) other inputs at the request of OWG	Sept. 2012 October 2012	
Analytical papers: i) global partnership ii) other themes as needed	Dec. 2012 TBD	The work plan and calendar of activities to be decided in the first meeting of each working group
iii) evaluation of the MDG monitoring framework and considerations for the numerical and data issues in the post 2015 agenda	Dec. 2012	In close coordination with the IAEG working group on post 2015
SG Report on Accelerating Progress 2013	June 2013	
Informal briefings and support to MS deliberations	Ongoing	
Communications strategy	5 October 2012	
Inventory of processes and proposals	Ongoing	Updates prepared every two weeks
SG Report on Accelerating Progress 2014	TBD	

High-level Panel

28. The High-level Panel is composed of 26 eminent persons appointed by the UN Secretary-General. There are three co-chairs: President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia; President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom. The Panel held its first meeting at the end of September in the margins of the high-level debate of the UN General Assembly.

29. The panel is expected to submit a report to the Secretary-General in the first half of 2013. Numerous groups have been formed or recruited to inform the deliberations of the High-level Panel. For instance the Government of Japan (former Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Kan) has created a contact group as an informal policy dialogue forum for the informal exchange of views and ideas among governments, civil society, foundations and research organizations.

30. The High-Level Panel has decided to hold three full meetings: (a) In London on 1-2 November 2012; (b) in Monrovia, Liberia in January 2013; and (c) in Jakarta, Indonesia in March 2013.

31. It is proposed to hold 100 national consultations (increased from 50 originally planned) and 12 global thematic consultations on the issues of health, equity, food security, environment and sustainable development, population dynamics, rights and accountability, growth and employment, energy and water. (Guidelines for country consultations are available at: <http://uncsd.iisd.org/news/undg-releases-guidelines-for-country-consultations->

[on-post-2015-development-agenda](#)). Regional consultations should take place to complement the national consultations and the thematic consultations at the global level.

Other

32. There are a number of other on-going processes, including the 20 year review of the Programme of Action for the International Conference on Population and Development, a possible high-level event in 2015 on Women (Beijing follow-up), and the Financing for Development (FfD) process. The outcomes of these processes are viewed as providing additional inputs into the larger post-2015 process.

33. The September 2013 meeting of the General Assembly on the post-2015 agenda will be an important opportunity for the SDG and post-2015 processes to converge.

Some links to information on the process

34. More information on the post-2015 development agenda and the related consultations is provided at: <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/mdg.shtml>.

35. Main Rio+20 follow-up activities: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20.html>.

36. The UN General Assembly's Second Committee (Economic and Financial Committee) convened a special event on "Conceptualising a set of Sustainable Development Goals" on 16 October (<http://uncsd.iisd.org/news/second-committee-holds-substantive-discussion-on-sdgs/>; <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsevent.html> – link to a facebook discussion and Twitter on the topic).

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