

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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For discussion and  
recommendations

Item 5(a) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**OUTLINE FOR THE CES 2015 SEMINAR ON THE RESPONSE BY OFFICIAL  
STATISTICS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Prepared by Switzerland (Seminar Chair), France and Sweden (Session Organizers)  
and the secretariat

*This paper presents the outline for the seminar “The response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals” to be organized during the CES 2015 plenary session. The Bureau discussed the outline and provided recommendations on the organization of the seminar.*

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. At its April 2014 plenary session, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) selected the topic “The response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals” for one of the CES seminars to be held in June 2015 in Geneva. Switzerland is the Seminar Organizer. Sweden and France will organize the sessions. The seminar will be chaired by Georges-Simon Ulrich, Director-General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO).
2. The UN-led stakeholder process to establish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is well underway. The goals, targets and indicators are discussed in different fora. Some of the processes have already finished. The Open Working Group has prepared a set of draft goals and targets (<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>). In December 2014, the UN Secretary General presented a synthesis report incorporating inputs from various stakeholders (*The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet*). The UN intergovernmental process is planned to conclude with formally adopting the SDGs in September 2015.
3. Once the goals have been established, a reporting and monitoring mechanism will need to be set up. The statistical community can be expected to provide baseline as soon as possible and start reporting on SDGs as of 2016.
4. The main focus of the CES seminar in June 2015 will be on the role of the national statistical offices (NSOs) in the global SDG monitoring mechanism. The seminar will provide an opportunity to discuss the role of official statistics in this process, identify whether and how it will still be possible to influence the setting up of the monitoring framework, and how statistical offices can prepare themselves to meet the huge expectations to deliver data for monitoring SDGs.

5. Discussions about the monitoring and accountability of the SDGs are ongoing and it is not clear yet how exactly the monitoring framework will be set up. Therefore, the outline summarizes the plans for the two sessions, their contents and expected outcomes. **The focus of the discussions at the seminar will be adjusted to take into account the latest developments with SDG indicators and monitoring framework** that will happen before the CES in June 2015. This outline is an update of the paper that was presented in October 2014 at the Bureau meeting.

6. The Rio+20 outcome document *The future we want* asked official statisticians to assist in the process of measuring progress and sustainable development. *Report of the eminent persons* and the Open Working Group on SDGs call for a data revolution, improved quality of statistics, and a regular mechanism for monitoring the achievement of the goals. Learning from the experience with MDGs, statisticians are continuously providing input to the SDG process to ensure that the goals and targets can be measurable. The *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development* prepared jointly by UNECE, Eurostat, OECD and a number of countries and endorsed in 2013 are a timely input to the SDG process.

7. Some recent developments that need to be taken into account in organizing the seminar are:

- **UNECE Regional Ministerial Consultation on monitoring and accountability for the post-2015 development agenda** (15-16 September 2014, Geneva). The consultation emphasized the importance of the regional level in facilitating exchange of best practices and lessons learned. There was a proposal to focus on a set of about 100 indicators to report annually in the UNECE region. Need for more real time, real context and disaggregated data, in particular on vulnerable groups, was highlighted. It was recommended to use existing mechanisms for accountability, such as the experience with peer reviews;
- Secretary General's **Independent Advisory Expert Group (IAEG) on Data Revolution** (co-chaired by Enrico Giovannini) – the group published the document *A world that counts* in November 2014 (<http://www.undatarevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/A-World-That-Counts.pdf>). The group made several recommendations how to define and implement data revolution. The report was an important input to the SG's synthesis report. The recommendations and the report will be discussed at the UN Statistical Commission in March 2015;
- The **Synthesis report** of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (*The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet*, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/700](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/700)) was presented in December 2014. Measuring new dynamics, the role of data in the new agenda, and monitoring, evaluation and reporting play an important role in the report. Based on this, the co-chairs of the inter-governmental process, Kenya and Ireland asked the UN Statistical Commission to prepare an indicator framework;
- Work of the UN Statistical Commission's **Friends of the Chair (FOC) group on broader measures of progress** (chaired by France and India) – the FOC is providing statistical advice to the SDG process and has made a comparison between the potential indicators to measure SDGs and the indicators currently available. The FOC is undertaking a survey on availability of indicators for the post-2015 development agenda in all countries and will present its work at the UN Statistical Commission in March 2015.
- A global conference on a **Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics**, was held in New York on 15-16 January 2015 with the aim to formulate a response to the

increased demand for detailed and timely data to monitor progress on the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda.

- An **expert meeting on the indicator framework for the post-2015 development agenda** will take place in New York on 25-26 February 2015. The meeting will discuss the development of the indicator framework for the post-2015 development agenda with the aim to reach a common understanding of how this work will be conducted within the available time frame. It will be followed by a **UNSC Friday Seminar** on the same topic (on 27 February).
- **Session of the UN Economic Commission for Europe**, at the ministerial level, to be held on 14-16 April 2015 in Geneva. The meeting will include a high-level thematic discussion on measuring and monitoring sustainable development. The UNECE Statistical Division was asked to organize this session. The session will discuss strengthening national statistical capacities, using new measurement approaches, and what ECE and its member countries can do to advance the “data revolution”, and ensure adequate measurement, monitoring and participation for sustainable development. The UNECE Executive Committee has just agreed that there will be a negotiated document with a concrete mandate and recommendations for ECE work.

8. The seminar outline takes into account the issues raised (and expected to be raised) by these initiatives.

9. The following countries and organizations have transmitted an abstract of a paper to the seminar: Session I: Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, United Kingdom; Session II: Eurostat, OECD, UNECE, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNSD. Some papers contain elements for both sessions (e.g. the paper of UNECE). Italy will also contribute a paper (session to be determined, abstract not yet received). A short overview of the contents of planned papers is provided below under the respective sessions.

## II. STRUCTURE OF THE SEMINAR

10. The seminar will be opened by the seminar organizer Switzerland and a keynote speech. Switzerland will propose a candidate as soon as possible.

11. The seminar will consist of two sessions. The first session will discuss the monitoring of SDGs at the national level and the role of NSOs in this process. NSOs need to play an active role as a producer but also as a coordinator of all statistical producers in a country. The second session will discuss the monitoring and review mechanism at a regional and global level, including strengthening statistical capacity building for this purpose. The seminar will finish with a concluding session to provide recommendations for concrete actions to enhance the role of statistical offices in measuring SDGs.

12. A draft timetable for the session is provided in the Annex.

### A. Session 1. Monitoring SDGs at the national level

*Session Organizer: France*

13. The session will discuss the role of NSOs pertaining to the monitoring of sustainable development goals at the national level. NSOs need to play a crucial role in producing data and reporting (statistical facts) and publishing data on sustainable development. The session

organizer will present the papers emphasizing the key role of NSOs. By using the CES flexible conceptual framework, NSOs will guarantee consistency in the monitoring at national, regional or international level as well as a balanced measure. NSOs have to be involved at an early stage in the process of defining goals and targets to guarantee their measurability. They have a crucial role as a coordinator of different statistical producers in countries to ensure the quality of the data.

14. The session will discuss the following issues:

- Institutional setup in countries: What will be the role of NSOs and how to strengthen this role? How to link this with the accountability at policy level and how to communicate with policy makers? What are the national experiences in coordinating the collection of indicators pertaining to monitoring sustainable development?
- How to define a subset of relevant indicators for the UNECE region? Adapting the indicators to regional, sub-regional and national circumstances: The UN goals are universal but the associated targets do not fit all countries around the world. How to achieve consistency between measuring sustainable development at national and regional and global levels?
- Data provision for monitoring the SDGs: How to find the necessary data? How to coordinate and cooperate with the other data providers in the country (government agencies, research, private sector, civil society, etc.)? How to fill the data gaps, in particular on vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups?
- Need for an integrated approach in measuring SDGs: how to consider possible conflicts and trade-offs between goals, which institution will be responsible for that; need to base on a framework, such as the one provided in *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development*;

15. The following countries have offered papers for the session:

- (a) Mexico - a paper which emphasizes the role as a coordinator of NSO at all levels. The paper will also outline the need of innovative use of data sources and new methodologies for data modelling. The paper will emphasize the need for a framework to assure the quality of data and indicators. Furthermore, it will present the importance of establishing sustainable partnerships with the private sector and academia for their expertise in new data. The data revolution needs to go beyond the statistical community to include public and private players, national agencies and international organizations.
- (b) The Netherlands - a paper focusing on the importance of the framework which can help to have a broader view on sustainable development than what policy makers define as important, with the risk to underrepresent some relevant areas. The paper will also discuss the importance of measuring social capital and the necessity to establish a link with the SNA and its satellite accounts like the SEEA.
- (c) Poland - a paper on its experience in monitoring sustainable development, and educating users by enhancing public awareness and promoting the idea of sustainable development. The paper will also present a Polish experiment of defining indicators for green economy and their relation with sustainable development.
- (d) Slovenia - a paper on its experience using the CES recommendations and framework to define a national set of indicators on measuring SDGs. The involvement of the NSO in the preparation of the Slovenian position in the OWG will also be presented as well as its important role as a coordinator in the country.

- (e) United Kingdom – a paper focusing on the main role of the Office of National Statistics to coordinate response to consultation, to host workshops, to share information, to evaluate the potential framework for reporting and measuring goals and targets, and the measurability of the proposed targets. The paper shall describe how ONS has worked with policy colleagues to ensure that statistical measurability can be considered throughout each stage of development of SDGs and how they have supported the international work on data revolution.
- (f) UNECE - a paper on the outcome of the pilot testing of the CES framework and indicators for measuring sustainable development. The framework draws on three conceptual dimensions of well-being as defined in the Brundtland report through 20 policy relevant themes. The framework proposes a set of 95 indicators selected on a thematic basis. Eight countries, namely Australia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Turkey and Ukraine volunteered to test the recommended indicators. The countries reviewed the comprehensive set of 95 indicators. In addition, the countries were invited to match their national indicators to the CES framework and provide feedback on whether the proposed framework in the CES Recommendations had been helpful in reviewing and constructing the national indicator sets. Finally, the countries were requested to pinpoint implementation issues, in particular to analyze possible data gaps, identify proxy indicators and suggest indicators to fill in “placeholders”.

## **B. Session 2. Cooperation in monitoring SDGs at regional and global level**

*Session Organizer: Sweden*

16. The political community is demanding an integrated indicator system with timely data, including many topics that are not part of official statistics. The statistical community has experience which is needed to create such an indicator system in cooperation with other data providers. The road map of the FOC on broader measures of progress is a good start for such a discussion. The role of different international organizations is important both as coordinators and data collectors.

17. The session will discuss the work of international statistical organizations in coordinating a global monitoring and a review mechanism. The session organizer will present the papers and discuss these as elements of the FOC road map for the statistical community.

18. The following issues will be discussed during this session:

- Coordination of SDG monitoring and reporting between the international organizations, and between international organizations and statistical systems in countries;
- How official statistics can contribute to monitoring SDGs at regional and global level?
- How to implement the recommendations of the IAEG on data revolution.
- Possible mechanisms for regional reporting and monitoring, e.g. peer reviews;
- Coordination of capacity building;
- How to prioritize the different actions contained in the FOC road map?

19. The following papers have been offered for the session:

- (a) Eurostat - a paper on Eurostat's role in monitoring the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) since 2006 and in coordinating activities within the European

Statistical System. The paper also outlines the future role that Eurostat will likely play once the post-2015 development agenda is formally adopted. Eurostat is fully committed to contribute to the process of establishing a new SDG monitoring framework. To support the monitoring of the SDGs, Eurostat can rely on its many years of experience in monitoring SD which is an important part of the work programme of European Statistics as well as of the system of methodologies for statistics, accounts and indicators.

- (b) OECD - a paper on OECD experience with the development and implementation of measures of well-being and sustainability. There is a good deal of overlap between the SDG goals as currently formulated and the contents of the OECD work on well-being. Consequently, it makes sense to build on the existing work and see how it can be usefully transformed into a contribution to the implementation of the SDGs. The paper will outline such an approach. It will explain (i) which concrete areas of the OECD's work on well-being can be directly used for advancing the SDG implementation agenda; (ii) where planned statistical developments will help to fill gaps; (iii) where research priorities are most usefully set and which research areas the OECD will tackle.
- (c) UNOHCHR - a paper on how to develop statistics for equality and non-discrimination. The paper will argue that much can be learned from existing collaborative initiatives of official statistics and human rights community based on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) framework for human rights indicators. It will present how this framework gives guidance on development of indicators anchored in human rights standards and on expanding data sources to account for the experiences of the most marginalized populations. The paper will give examples of various applications of this framework showing how official statisticians can cooperate with non-official data producers and data users, particularly those in the human rights fields, to improve data collection, data production, dissemination, and reporting. Cooperation among statistical systems, international organizations, data users, and rights-holders is fundamental in the effective monitoring of the SDGs. However, there are gaps in existing cooperation that should be further strengthened. The paper will provide recommendations on the role of international organizations and official statistics in enforcing common standards and ensuring that data is a global public good that supports the respect, protection, and fulfilment of human rights.
- (d) UNSD - a paper on the various processes and work streams related to the development and implementation of an indicator framework to monitor the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda and how these relate to each other. This includes e.g. the intergovernmental process towards the post-2015 development agenda and the involvement of the Statistical Commission and its working mechanisms in this process along with the work of the Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures of progress and the outcome of the deliberations of the Statistical Commission at its forty-sixth session (3-6 March 2015). The paper will touch upon the follow-up and implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development (IEAG) contained in its report *A World that counts*.

### **C. Conclusions and recommendations for follow-up**

20. The expected outcome of the seminar could be:

- Sharing some of the experiences of the statistical community regarding measuring sustainable development which is crucial for the reporting and monitoring of

SDGs. The use of a framework such as the *CES Recommendations* allows consistency at different levels and a balanced monitoring of sustainable development;

- Further specifying the involvement of NSOs and clarifying priorities for coordination and communication with other involved parties in the process of defining indicators and filling data gaps. A new global Action Plan for statistics could be valuable;
- A discussion on how statistical offices can prepare themselves and identify the parts of the suggested road map suggested by the FOC on broader measures of progress that requires enhanced cooperation.

#### **IV. NEXT STEPS**

21. The Seminar and Session Organizers will contact the authors of the papers for the seminar to take into account the discussion at the CES Bureau meeting and any other relevant developments at the regional and global level. The updated outline will also be sent to the countries and organizations who offered to contribute papers to ask for the abstracts of the planned papers. The contributors will be asked to focus their papers on issues which are planned to be discussed during the seminar.

**ANNEX. Draft timetable for the CES 2015 seminar on the response by official statistics to the SDGs**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Document</b>
9:50-17:30	First Seminar		
	3	The response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals – organized by Switzerland, France and Sweden	
9:50-9:55		Introduction by the Seminar Chair, Georges-Simon Ulrich, Switzerland	
9:55-10:25		Keynote speech by a politician	
	3a	Session I: Monitoring SDGs at national level Session Chair: France Papers: Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, United Kingdom, UNECE	ECE/CES/2015/...
10:25-10:50		Introduction by Session Chair and key issues identified in the papers	
10:50-11:10		Comments by countries/organizations who prepared papers	
11:10-11:30	Coffee/tea break		
11:30-12:25		General discussion	
12:25-12:30		Short summary of the session	
12:30-14:30	Lunch break		
	3b	Session II: Cooperation in monitoring SDGs at regional and global level Session Chair: Sweden Papers: Eurostat, OECD, UNHCR and UNSD	ECE/CES/2015/...
14:30-14:55		Introduction by Session Chair and key issues identified in the papers	
14:55-15:15		Comments by countries/organizations who prepared papers	
15:15-15:30	Coffee/tea break		
15:30-16:25		General discussion	
16:25-16:30		Short summary of the session	
16:30-17:30		Recommendations for follow-up work; conclusions by seminar organizer	

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