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Items for discussion and decision: data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. The present report provides an overview of the ongoing work of the Expert Group for the implementation of the global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report describes the activities undertaken by the Group following Statistical Commission decision 48/101. The report contains a description of work undertaken by the Expert Group, including: a) methodological development of Tier III indicators and updates to the Tier classification; b) annual refinements of some indicators and a timeline for the 2020 comprehensive review; c) guidelines and best practices on data flows and global data reporting for Sustainable Development Goals; and d) work carried out in the data disaggregation work stream and by the working groups on interlinkages, SDMX and geo-spatial information. The Commission will also have before it a background document on the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Statistical Commission is invited to comment on progress made by the Expert Group and the direction of future work. The points for discussion by the Commission are set out in paragraph 34 of the present report.

* E/CN.3/2018/1.

I. Introduction

1. As mandated by General Assembly resolution 70/1, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators was tasked to develop and implement the global indicator framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Expert Group, established by the Statistical Commission at its forty-sixth session, submitted an initial global indicator framework to the Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session in March 2016. The Commission, in its decision 47/101, agreed, as a practical starting point, with the proposed global indicator framework, subject to future technical refinement.
2. The Expert Group examined possible refinements of the global indicator framework following the decision of the Statistical Commission 47/101 and proposed a revised global indicator framework at its forty-eighth session. The Statistical Commission, in decision 48/101, “agreed on the revised global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including refinements on several indicators and stressed that this agreement fulfilled substantially on the promise of delivering a global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as requested by the General Assembly.” A draft resolution containing the global indicator framework was recommended by the Statistical Commission to the Economic and Social Council for its adoption.
3. The Economic and Social Council, at its seventy-first session on 7 June 2017, in decision 2017/228 took note of the report of the Statistical Commission on its forty-eighth session containing the draft resolution and the revised global indicator framework. The General Assembly, on 6 July 2017, adopted resolution A/RES/71/313 approving the work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and adopted the global indicator framework “as a voluntary and country-led instrument that includes the initial set of indicators to be refined annually and reviewed comprehensively by the Commission at its fifty-first session, to be held in 2020, and its fifty-sixth session, to be held in 2025, and will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels, which will be developed by Member States”.
4. The present report describes the work carried out by the Expert Group from March 2017 to December 2017 for the implementation of the global indicator framework, on the basis of the work programme agreed by the Commission and in accordance with decision 48/101.

II. Implementation of the global indicator framework

5. In 2017, the Expert Group held two physical meetings, each attended by some 150 representatives from member countries, observer countries, international and regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. The Group also continued to interact electronically and through teleconferences between meetings.
6. The fifth meeting was held from 28-31 March 2017 in Ottawa, Canada, hosted by Statistics Canada. The sixth meeting was held from 11-14 November 2017 in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, hosted by the Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies of the Kingdom of Bahrain. At these two meetings, the Expert Group discussed progress made on the methodological development of Tier III indicators and reviewed and updated the Tier classification; reviewed annual refinements for a few selected indicators; discussed the proposed guidelines on data flows and global data reporting and data collection calendar; reviewed the work carried out by the work stream on data disaggregation and the three working groups; and shared experiences on SDG implementation and reporting at national, regional, global and thematic levels.
7. Following the revised terms of reference of the Expert Group and its mechanism for the rotation of the membership and chairmanship, agreed by the Statistical Commission in its decision 48/101, new members of the Expert Group were nominated through existing regional mechanisms in May 2017. Annex I contains the updated membership of the Group. At the sixth meeting, Dr. Albina Chuwa from Tanzania was elected as the new co-chair of the Expert Group, replacing Dr. Lisa Bersales from the Philippines. Dr. Albina Chuwa joins Mr. Enrique Ordaz from Mexico in leading the work of the Expert Group.

A. Review of Tier classification and methodology development of Tier III indicators

8. The Expert Group clarified the criteria/definitions of Tier classification at its fifth meeting, as follows:

(a) Tier I: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant;

(b) Tier II: Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries;

(c) Tier III: No internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/standards are being (or will be) developed or tested;

9. In accordance with the mechanism for updating the classification of the indicators, the Group reviewed the Tier classification of the indicators during the fifth and sixth meetings of the Expert Group. The Group focused particularly on indicators that were refined and approved at the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission, Tier III indicators with sufficient advancements in methodological development and all Tier I and II indicators based on data availability at the global and regional levels.

10. Tier classification was reviewed at the fifth meeting of the Group for the 11 refined indicators in the revised global indicator framework adopted at the 48th session of the Commission. Ten of the 11 indicators were classified as Tier III and one was classified as Tier II based on their methodological development and data availability at the global level. In addition, five modified Sendai indicators on disaster risk reduction were reviewed at the same meeting, of which four were classified as Tier II and one as Tier III.

11. Significant progress has been made in the methodological development of many Tier III indicators. As a result, the Group considered several requests for the Tier reclassification of Tier III indicators. In advance of the meetings of the Expert Group, agencies were invited to provide, at least one month before the meeting, supporting documents for the reclassification of Tier III indicators. These documents included: (a) a 1-2 page summary of the request; (b) draft metadata; (c) a full methodology development narrative (including a list of pilot countries, data and other results from the pilot studies); and (d) any other relevant material. The documents were intended to provide information on how the national statistical system and, in particular, national statistical offices were involved in the methodology development and when the methodology had been accepted as an international standard. At the fifth meeting of the Group, 12 indicators were reviewed for reclassification and four of them were moved to Tier II. At the sixth meeting of the Group and a subsequent Webex meeting, 29 more indicators of Tier III were reviewed for reclassification due to advancements in methodological development, of which 17 were reclassified as Tier II. The Expert Group provided feedback to custodian agencies on those indicators that could not be reclassified noting on the specific methodological work that is still needed prior to the consideration of reclassification.

12. Following the approved work programme of the Expert Group, a review of the availability of data for Tier I and II indicators was conducted. The data availability of all Tier I and II indicators was reviewed in the global indicator database as of 28 August 2017 to assess country and population coverage for each region where the indicator is relevant. The assessment concluded that eight Tier I indicators did not have sufficient data coverage and should therefore be moved to Tier II and 19 Tier II indicators met the criteria to be moved to Tier I.

13. Based on the updates to the Tier classification following these reviews, as of 1 December 2017, the updated Tier classification contains 93 Tier I indicators, 66 Tier II indicators and 68 Tier III indicators. In addition to these, there are 5 indicators that have multiple Tiers (different components of the indicator are classified into different Tiers). The updated Tier classification can be found at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/>.

14. Given the large number of Tier reclassification requests received in advance of the Expert Group meetings and the urgent need to reclassify the indicator when the methodological development has advanced, the

IAEG revised its mechanism for updating the classification of indicators. The review of reclassification requests will occur when requirements are met at the two physical meetings and via Webex meetings throughout the year, based on a calendar developed by the Group. The Group plans to hold bi-monthly Webex meetings, if needed, to review Tier reclassification requests. Custodian agencies are required to provide their supporting documents at least one month in advance of these meetings so that the members of the Group have sufficient time to review all documents.

15. As established in the work programme of the Expert Group (E/CN.3.2017 in subparagraph 35 (a)), the group developed procedures for the review of workplans for Tier III indicators. Throughout the year, the group conducted a thorough review of Tier III workplans, flagging any issues in the current methodological work, in particular for those referring to targets with a 2020 deadline. Key issues identified by the group included a) workplans or timelines requiring more clarification; b) timelines for some workplans that would not meet the 2020 deadline; c) workplans where the methodology was already complete and data collection had begun; and d) workplans with limited information or where the methodological development had not yet begun. The Group followed up with the custodian agencies on the issues identified.

16. Agencies were invited to provide updated workplans to ensure the acceleration of methodological development, where needed. Over 40 updated workplans were submitted and all Tier III workplans are available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/tierIII-indicators/>. Workplans are currently missing for a few indicators that remain without an active custodian agency. If an indicator remains without a custodian agency, the Group has indicated that it may be refined or removed at the comprehensive review in 2020.

B. Improving data flows and global data reporting for Sustainable Development Goals

17. With decision 48/101 (1), the Group was tasked to develop guidelines on how custodian agencies and countries can work together to contribute to the data flows necessary to have harmonized statistics. An initial drafting team was established at the fifth Meeting in March 2017. Relevant key inputs were provided to this process: (a) The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) developed a document outlining guiding principles of data reporting and data sharing for the global monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was shared with Expert Group in October 2017; (b) As requested by the Group, a series of case studies on data flows and data reporting for seven representative global indicators were carried out to highlight the different ways in which data for these indicators flow from the national to the regional and international level; (c) The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) also conducted data flow pilot studies to describe the experiences, needs and resources of the main actors involved in producing statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals. The results of the studies were shared with the Group at its sixth meeting and the valuable inputs will be incorporated into the draft document.

18. The IAEG-SDGs drafting team presented a first draft of the document *Guidelines and Best Practices on Data Flows and Global Data Reporting for Sustainable Development Goals* at the sixth meeting. It was decided to split the document into two separate ones: 1) Guidelines and 2) Best Practices (which would be a 'living document', updated when new experiences become available). Going forward, the drafting team will revise the guidelines given the feedback received by countries, agencies and stakeholders at the meeting and an updated draft will be circulated for an open consultation to both countries and custodian agencies in December 2017 through 12 January 2018. Comments and inputs from the open consultation will be taken into consideration and a finalized document will be made available as a background document to the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission by 15 February 2018. A document on best practices for the data flows between countries and custodian agencies will be prepared before the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission in 2019.

19. In addition, two exercises were carried out to improve data flows and global data reporting for Sustainable Development Goals. The first is the compilation of data collection calendars. In accordance with decision 48/101 (k), custodian agencies were requested to provide a list of national agencies providing data to the international system and share data collection calendars in order to ensure the full traceability of data used in international sources. A form was sent to custodian agencies of Tier I and II indicators in August 2017 by the Secretariat

requesting information on agencies' data collection processes, including a list of national entities providing data to the international system, periodicity of data collection and focal point information for the indicators. Information for over 100 indicators was received and will be made available in advance of the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission at the following website: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>.

20. The second exercise was to collect information on National Statistical Office SDG data contact persons. To assist in strengthening the central coordinating role of National Statistical Offices, the Secretariat requested voluntary contact information from National Statistical Offices for a designated SDG data contact person (or contact persons) that can be systematically kept informed via email, when custodian agencies are collecting, processing and disseminating data for SDG indicators, including in those cases where the custodian agency's primary contact is in a line ministry. As of 1 December 2017, contact information has been received for more than 90 countries. The information will be shared with the international agencies responsible for the collection, processing and dissemination of SDG data.

C. SDG implementation at national, regional, global and thematic levels

21. At the sixth meeting of the Expert Group, countries, regional commissions, international agencies and stakeholders presented their experiences on SDG implementation and reporting at national, regional, global and thematic levels.² Country presentations focused on sharing national experiences and challenges in implementing the indicator framework and SDG reporting. Several regional organizations and international agencies shared regional and thematic efforts on SDG monitoring. Many countries are developing national data platforms for SDG reporting and working closely with potential partners including civil society organizations. One of the major challenges noted was related to data gaps for those indicators under Tier II and III categories. Additionally, information was provided on the work carried out by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, in cooperation with the United Nations system, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as reflected in E/CN.3/2018/3.

III. Working Groups and Work stream of the Expert Group

A. Working groups of the Expert Group

22. Three working groups were established by the Expert Group in March 2016, focusing on the following topics: statistical data and metadata exchange, geospatial information and interlinkages. Each working group is composed of members of the Expert Group and other invited representatives, as determined by their respective terms of reference.³ Below is a brief summary of the work of each group over the past year and descriptions of future meetings and work.

1. Working group on statistical data and metadata exchange

23. The working group on statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX) consists of 12 country members and 10 international agency members, chaired by Colombia. The working group will develop a data structure definition(s) and metadata structure definition(s) for all SDG indicators, which will be used to report and disseminate the SDG indicators at the national and international levels. Challenges the working group face include the diversity of and possible changes to the SDG indicators; the need to address the ability to report and disseminate at multiple levels; the vast number and diversity of stakeholders and counterparts; and the need to ensure that countries are able to adapt the data structure definition(s) to suit their own needs.

24. The working group has conducted monthly teleconferences. It held its second meeting in October 2017, which focused on (a) disaggregation; (b) remaining code lists; and (c) metadata concepts and metadata structure

² See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-06/> (Documents: Agenda item 8).

³ The terms of reference, membership and other important information of each working group can be found at <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>.

definition(s). Moving forward, the working group plans to develop initial data structure definitions by the end of 2017. It will then conduct a pilot data exchange in the first quarter of 2018, followed by a production data exchange in the fourth quarter of 2018. The development of metadata structure definition(s) is also planned for the fourth quarter of 2018.

2. Working group on geospatial information

25. The working group on geospatial information currently consists of 16 country members and 6 international agency members (see the working group website: <http://ggim.un.org/UNGGIM-wg6/>). The group, co-chaired by Mexico and Sweden, held its third meeting in Kunming, China, from 6 – 8 May 2017, deliberated on issues related to disaggregation according to geographic location, and data availability to produce indicators. The group recognized that disaggregation of national statistical data can be considerably strengthened through the “geographic location” lens, and the need to demonstrate the availability and usability of geospatial information including Earth observations for SDG monitoring.

26. The Working Group held a fourth meeting in New York from 6 – 8 December 2017 to progress its work on disaggregation and data availability. The meeting also considered additional issues including liaising with and contributing to the work of custodian agencies and capacity development for national statistical systems in geo-statistical processes. The meeting concluded with agreement to focus on task streams on disaggregation according to geographic location and aggregation of geocoded unit level data and “production ready” data for indicators. Other tasks will include issues related to working with custodian agencies, availability and usability of geospatial information, case studies and exemplars, and capacity development.

3. Working group on interlinkages

27. The working group on interlinkages currently consists of 11 country members and 8 representatives from academia, international and regional organisations and civil society organisations. The group is co-chaired by Canada and China and conducts most of its meetings via WebEx and through email. The working group has focused on identifying possible interlinkages within the global indicator framework. An open global consultation was launched by the working group in November 2017, aiming to identify interlinkages, integrated analyses, and areas and frameworks that can facilitate the monitoring of the SDGs. The group plans to report back to the Expert Group in the spring of 2018 on the results of these consultations and its plan for developing best practices and strategies for harnessing these interlinkages.

4. Joint subgroup of IAEG-SDGs and HLG

28. In addition to the three working groups, the joint subgroup of the Expert Group and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is developing a plan to address immediate priorities, including statistical capacity-building. The group, in partnership with Paris21 and supported by the Statistics Division will conduct a survey on capacity building from December 2017 to January 2018 to provide an overview of the types of capacity building activities needed as well as the consideration of a financing mechanism.⁴

B. Work stream on data disaggregation

29. With decision 48/101 (j), the work stream on data disaggregation was welcomed by the Statistical Commission. In line with the work programme of the Expert Group in subparagraph 35 (d), the group was tasked to develop further guidance on the issue of data disaggregation. As a result, the group formed a data disaggregation drafting team to develop a more detailed work plan for the data disaggregation work stream and an initial stocktaking document. The drafting team consists of 9 country members, led by Germany and Ghana, and

⁴ For more information on the joint subgroup, see E/CN.3/2018/4

held several virtual meetings and a physical meeting on the sidelines of the UN World Data Forum in January 2017.

30. The Expert Group developed a document containing a stocktaking analysis of data availability of disaggregation in the global SDG database and an overview of existing and possible standards of disaggregation. The Group also identified key challenges on which to focus. The group plans to establish a mechanism for collaboration and consultation with specialized groups and custodian agencies in relation to the specific data disaggregation dimensions (i.e., age, sex, disability, etc.) in December 2017. The Expert Group will prepare a background document on data disaggregation for consideration at the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission in 2019.

IV. Annual refinements and a timeline for the 2020 comprehensive review

31. According to GA resolution A/RES/71/313 and the plan and criteria that the Group agreed for possible annual minor refinements⁵, the Expert Group reviewed the list of indicators proposed by the members for possible refinements. At the sixth meeting of the Expert Group, four annual refinements were proposed by the Group based on the agreed criteria and can be found in Annex II.

32. The Expert Group established a timeline for the 2020 comprehensive review. The timeline proposed is as follows: a) From December 2017 to February 2018: the group will review the current list of 37 possible additional indicators for 33 targets⁶ to determine which should be included in an open consultation; b) By end of 2018: an open consultation on the proposed possible additional indicators will be launched; c) By mid-2019: the group will review indicators and propose changes and possible deletions based on the criteria set out in the IAEG-SDG report to the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2017/2, para 22) and carry out an open consultation; d) By September 2019: the group will review the results of the consultations and give preference to those proposals with an established methodology and data available; e) By the end of 2019: the group will prepare the final proposal for the 2020 review to the Statistical Commission.

V. Work programme of the Expert Group

33. It is suggested that the Expert Group carry out the following activities between March 2018 and March 2019:

- (a) Continue the review of workplans for Tier III indicators and reclassify indicators when requirements are met at the two physical meetings and via bi-monthly Webex meetings, if needed;
- (b) Conduct an open consultation and finalize the proposal for additional indicators to be presented as part of the comprehensive review for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its fifty-first session in 2020;
- (c) Begin work on the comprehensive review by compiling a preliminary list of possible changes, refinements and deletions to the indicator framework for an open consultation in mid-2019;
- (d) Continue the work of the joint subgroup of the IAEG-SDGs and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by reviewing data availability and capacity building needs for Tier I and II indicators;
- (e) Establish a mechanism for discussion with specialized groups and custodian agencies in relation to the specific data disaggregation dimensions (i.e., age, sex, disability, etc.) and finalize document for consideration at the fiftieth session of the Statistical Commission in 2019;

⁵ See E/CN.3/2017/2 in subparagraph 21.

⁶ See E/CN.3/2017/2, Annex V (Possible additional indicators for inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goal indicators).

- (f) Continue the work of the three working groups, on statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX), geospatial information and interlinkages;
- (g) Develop a living document on best practices for the data flows between countries and custodian agencies;
- (h) Hold two meetings, the first in the first-quarter of 2018 and the second in the fourth-quarter of 2018, on dates to be determined, and continue to interact electronically and through teleconferences, as needed.

VI. Points for discussion

34. The Statistical Commission is invited to:

- (a) take note of the work conducted by the IAEG-SDGs in response to the decisions of this commission;**
- (b) express its views and adopt the annual refinements of some indicators in the global indicator framework as presented in Annex II; express its views on the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for Sustainable Development Goals as contained in the background document;**
- (c) express its views and adopt the proposed work programme of the Expert Group for the next year.**

Annex I**Updated list of members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators****Chair of the Statistical Commission***

- Brazil

Eastern Africa

- Ethiopia
- United Republic of Tanzania

Middle and Southern Africa

- Botswana
- Cameroon

Western Africa

- Ghana
- Niger

Northern Africa

- Algeria
- Egypt

Western Asia

- Bahrain

Central, Eastern, Southern and South-Eastern Asia

- China
- India
- Tajikistan
- Philippines

Oceania

- Fiji
- Samoa

The Caribbean

- Grenada
- Trinidad and Tobago

* The Chair of the Statistical Commission is an ex officio member of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

Central and South America

- Brazil
- Colombia
- Mexico

Eastern Europe

- Belarus
- Russian Federation

North America and Northern, Southern and Western Europe

- Canada
- France
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Sweden

Annex II
Annual Refinements to the global indicator framework

Goals and targets (from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)
Refinement of Indicator

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure

1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

6.2.1 Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, **including a** hand-washing facility with soap and water

6.2.1 Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months

16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

17.17.1 Amount of United States dollars committed to public-private partnerships and civil society partnerships

17.17.1 Amount of United States dollars committed to (a) public-private partnerships and (b) civil society partnerships
