Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Statistics Division

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First Meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators
New York, 1-2 June 2015
Venue: UNHQ, Conference Room 3

The indicator framework: global, regional, sub-national and thematic indicators

(as of 28 May 2015)

Main points of consensus from the Expert Group Meeting on the indicator framework for the post-2015 development agenda, New York, 25-26 February 2015 in respect to the design of the indicator framework:[1]

- It is necessary to define an architecture for an integrated monitoring framework which would include global indicators and different levels of regional, national and thematic monitoring;

- The global level monitoring framework should be limited to a small number of indicators;

- Such indicators should be selected on the basis of an agreed set of criteria;

- It is important to draw from existing integrated statistical frameworks.

Additional excerpts from the meeting report:

- Indicators should be organized in an integrated architecture with various appropriate levels of reporting to meet the requirements of sustainable development. The need to consider the development of a small set of high-level indicators for the full set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including the economic, social and environmental pillars, for effective communication of progress was also stressed. This high-level should be universally relevant and effective in detecting changes resulting from policy interventions and explicitly include equity indicators.

- There was recognition that after a clear mapping between the existing statistical frameworks and the SDG indicator framework, the development of the global indicators could draw from existing integrated statistical frameworks such as, for

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[1] See Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the indicator framework for the post-2015 development agenda, New York, 25-26 February 2015, available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/post-2015/activities/egm-on-indicator-framework/default.html.

example the Conference of European Statisticians recommendations for measuring sustainable development, the standards of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians, the System of National Accounts, and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting.

- There was recognition that in view of the need to develop a comprehensive monitoring framework for the SDGs while, at the same time, limiting the number of global indicators, several levels of monitoring should be clearly defined and agreed upon. These would include regional, national and thematic/sectorial monitoring levels. In this context, it was also pointed out that it is easier to inform effectively with fewer indicators, whilst not preventing programme and project specific indicators from being generated.

- There was also consensus that a certain level of flexibility should be allowed in the framework of indicators so that new and emerging issues can be integrated at a later stage. There should be some flexibility so that indicators can be refined or adjusted over the 15 year period to adapt the framework to newly emerging policy priorities, as well as to changes in data availability.

- Differences between national and international estimates should be fully and clearly explained. Also, the need for producing estimates would be largely reduced by improving national statistical capacity. In this context, the key role played by regional agencies and mechanisms was stressed. Statistical experts from the international agencies and national authorities should be more closely engaged with the work at the regional level.

- There was consensus that there should be some degree of flexibility to allow indicators that are not yet fully developed, to still be considered as part of the framework. These would be a special tier of indicators that have yet to be conceptually fully developed and that will require further work for the definition of their metadata and identification of the most appropriate data sources.