UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Statistical Commission
48th Session

New York, 7 March 2017

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STATEMENT
ON BEHALF OF 45 MEMBER STATES[1] OF
THE GROUP OF FRIENDS OF CHILDREN AND THE SDGs
ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILD-FOCUSED INDICATORS AND DATA

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"Our children are the rock on which our future will be built."

The words of Nelson Mandela resonate with the values, principles and efforts embodied by the SDGs. Every **aspect of a child's life is impacted by the SDGs.** Their status in terms of income, housing, nutrition, health, education, employment, well-being, environment and exposure to violence and conflict is indicative of their future and, respectively, of our future. As we begin implementing and monitoring the SDGs, the **Group of Friends is committed to making sure that children remain at the centre of the 2030 Agenda.**

The 2030 Agenda commits us to "leave no one behind", and therefore to <u>leave no child behind</u>. The experts gathered here know very well that delivering on this promise will require more and better data that enables us to track progress for **all children everywhere** and to address the social, economic and environmental drivers of inequalities in a more integrated manner. Considering the complexity of the technical challenges facing national statistical offices we would like to suggest that the Statistical Commission considers the following:

Firstly, we must invest in improving the availability of SDG indicators related to children and disaggregating them to make sure that no child is left behind. Out of the 169 SDG targets, 95 are either directly or indirectly related to children. We are pleased to see that the list of global indicators presented to the Statistical Commission includes many which are child-related, however the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDG indicators has also made clear that critical data gaps remain. In particular we note that data availability for the majority of child-related global SDG indicators is limited, and only a small number are sufficiently disaggregated for analyzing the most relevant types of inequality such as income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics.

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[1] Permanent Missions of: Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Pakistan, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uruguay.

For example less than 50% of countries have comparable data on the proportion of children living in multi-dimensional poverty or the proportion of children under five who are developmentally on track. And while data on essential child health services has improved in recent years, disaggregating the most disadvantaged populations remains a challenge. We must therefore unite our efforts to improve the availability and quality of indicators for children and **we would welcome more detailed guidance from the IAEG on SDG Indicators on how to accelerate efforts to collect disaggregated indicators to ensure no child is left behind.**

Secondly, we need to invest in innovative new methods for collecting and analysing data needed to track progress for children. The SDG targets address a wide range of complex issues affecting children ranging from multi-dimensional poverty to sexual violence. While international standards already exist for many of the global indicators presented, we note that some of them are new and will need to be developed further before they can be taken up in national data systems. We therefore look to the Statistical Commission and international agencies with expertise in child-related indicators to work together to validate new techniques for collecting data on complex issues such as Early Childhood Development.

We welcome the many recent innovations in measurement techniques (such as household survey modules addressing foundational learning skills, child disability and drinking water quality). The Group of Friends believes that effective monitoring of child-related SDG indicators will require continuous investment in enhancing both traditional methods of official data collection such as household surveys and administrative systems as well as new and complimentary methods such as earth observation and data collected from citizens including parents and children themselves. We support the call for concerted action to strengthen and modernize national statistical systems, capture data on children outside households and welcome the establishment of the World Data Forum which provides an important platform for sharing data innovations.

Finally, our commitment to place children at the center of the 2030 Agenda highlights the importance of adopting a thematic focus on children in SDG follow-up and review processes. We believe we have to create the space for thematic reporting on children within the context of the SDGs at the global level through the High Level Political Forum, and at the regional and country levels. We seek to realize the rights of all children; and thus, we must pay particular attention to those who are the most vulnerable and at risk. Reporting progress for children within the SDGs is a concrete way to reaffirm our pledge to account for everyone…and to leave no one behind.

SDG progress is critical for children. Our efforts on data collection and analysis can amplify the impact of our social and economic policies so that all children have the bright future they deserve.