

Civil Society statement on Development of global reporting mechanisms and data flow at the 3rd meeting of the Inter Agency and Expert Group on SDGs indicators in Mexico city from 30 March to 1st April, 2016.

Delivered by Eric Swanson, Open Data Watch - Friday, 1st April 2016.

When all the indicators have been agreed and data sources have been identified, the success or failure of the SDGs will be known through the reporting mechanisms that grow up around them. But we should not think of reporting as merely a formal, technical process of passing data between fixed nodes of a rigid structure. Even the term “mechanism” is inappropriate. Data are not simply fuel used to power a machine.

Robust, open, and multi-level channels for communicating SDG data and equally open and attentive channels for receiving feedback are essential for the credibility of the SDG project. The Secretary General’s Independent Expert and Advisory Group on the Data Revolution called for the creation of “‘A Global Users Forum for Data for SDGs,’ to ensure feedback loops between data producers and users, help the international community to set priorities and assess results.” The IEAG also noted the need to include both private and civil sector stakeholders in partnerships for innovation in data production and sharing and to consider sources of citizen generated and participatory data.

To eliminate information inequalities and carry forward the data revolution for sustainable development, it is essential that all participants adopt principles of open data, ensuring that all of the data and calculation methods underpinning the SDGs -- including surveys, administrative sources, remote sensing data, and big data -- are freely and openly available to all, while taking appropriate steps at all stages of reporting and data collection to ensure privacy and the protection of human rights. The quality and availability of data for monitoring the SDGs can only be assured by drawing on the expertise and resources available from all stakeholders.

Beyond the exchange of data, new channels for SDG reporting must evolve to carry analysis and interpretation of results and to ensure that the voices of those who are vulnerable, poor, and disenfranchised can also be heard. These will not all be “official” channels, but the official bodies should participate and respond to them. The countries, agencies, and stakeholder

organizations represented here should lead by example by implementing open data policies, engaging in active dialogue with data suppliers and users, and most importantly, not forgetting our shared commitment to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.