

## Meeting summary of the joint meeting between the United Nations Statistics Division and the Measure What Matters (MWM) project

1:15– 2:45pm, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014, UN Conference Building Room A, New York

### Participants

#### Name & Position

#### Organization

##### *UNSD team*

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Ivo Havinga, Chief, Economic Statistics Branch                     | UN DESA Statistics Division |
| Alessandra Alfieri, Chief, Environmental-Economic Accounts Section | UN DESA Statistics Division |

##### *MWM project representatives*

|                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Jessica Fries   | Accounting for Sustainability (A4S) |
| Pietro Bertazzi | Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)   |
| Farooq Ullah    | Stakeholder Forum                   |

##### *Roundtable participants*

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| Peter Harper, Deputy Australian Statistician   | Australian Statistics Authority: ABS                                       |
| Curtis Ravenel, Global Head of Sustainability  | Bloomberg  |
| Marcia Quintslr, Director of Surveys   | Brazilian Statistics Authority: IBGE                                       |
| Claire Plateau, Deputy Head of Insee & Sustainable development coordinator for the Group of Friends of the Chair on Broader Measures of Progress (FOC) | French Statistical Authority: INSEE  |
| Louise Kantrow, Permanent Representative of the International Chamber of Commerce to the United Nations  | International Chamber of Commerce  |
| Laura Rainier, Manager of Sustainability   | Li & Fung (global sourcing firm)   |
| Bert Kroese, Deputy Director General   | Netherlands Statistics Authority: CBS                                      |
| Paul Boykas, Vice President  | Pepsico US   |
| George Favalaro, Managing Director Sustainability  | PricewaterhouseCoopers   |
| Mariola Pogacnik, Director, Management Consulting  | PricewaterhouseCoopers   |
| Paul Ladd, Head of Post-2015 team  | UN Development Program   |
| Rikke Munk Hansen, Chief of Economic and Environmental Statistics Section  | UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)         |
| Ole Hansen, Head LEAD Program  | UN Global Compact  |
| Ana Blanco, Reporting Manager  | UN Global Compact  |
| Neil Jackson, Head of Profession for Statistics  | United Kingdom: Government Department for International Development (DFID) |
| Jessica McGlyn, Director US  | World Business Council on Sustainable Development                          |
| Peter Hazlewood, Director, Ecosystems and Development  | World Resources Institute  |

## Background

*Measure What Matters* was launched in June 2012 at Rio+20 and aims to facilitate in the long term greater alignment between different communities (international, national and corporate) so that they are all 'measuring what matters' in coherent ways. This is done by:

- Taking stock of current measures within specific focus areas for sustainable development and identifying shared priorities and synergies;
- Mobilizing a global network of experts to contribute to discussions via an online platform;
- Convening a series of high level meetings to bring together key decision makers from the corporate, national and international level.

The objective of the March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting was to bring together experts of corporate sustainability reporting, national statisticians and international agencies dealing with the monitoring of UN development goals to discuss how the measurement of progress could be better aligned across these levels and synergies achieved. In particular, it provided input to the development of a possible agenda of collaboration between the statistical community and the business sector including a wider event to be held towards the end of 2014 in collaboration with UNSD.

## Questions discussed

- How can corporate sustainability data be used by Governments and Statistics Agencies to measure progress?
- How can national and global data and indicators better inform businesses?
- How to increase alignment between targets and indicators using the post-2015 process?

## Meeting summary

### Government perspectives

- Until there is harmonisation and mechanisms put in place to improve reliability, the use of corporate data remains a challenge. A tension may exist between the current focus on materiality among businesses potentially leading to greater diversity of reporting rather than convergence or scale of coverage. International coordination between statistics offices and private sector standard setters will be important to achieving improved alignment.
- Where governments are considering extending the scope of business data collected through national statistics, there is a strong efficiency argument for aligning measures between existing private sector standards and government standards that may be developed or already used.
- Governments have a track record of collating and aggregating data. Government collation and aggregation of data can help to address concerns around confidentiality, sometimes expressed by business as a barrier to reporting certain information sets.
- Governments have different incentives for collating information. In some countries, there is limited existing partnership between public and private sector. The MWM project could be an important facilitator to increase understanding and potential partnership, critical for achievement of the post-2015 SDGs.
- The Dutch statistics authority (CBS) explained the work done within the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development with regard to *measurements on different scales*. This work included an exploration of how

corporate data may be used in the application of a comprehensive national framework for measuring sustainable development and, to that end, an analysis of indicator sets provided for instance by Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) in its guidelines for sustainability reporting.

- The Group of Friends of the Chair on Broader Measures of Progress (FOC) supported the MWM initiative and is open to explore this new field, engaging with robust and internationally agreed initiatives.

#### Business perspectives

- Information giving insight into future impact and performance is key, not just hard data on current impact. Businesses are increasingly seeking to report in this way, which involves a new type of information set that is more predictive, not just backwards looking.
- There is a strong focus on supply chain reporting at the moment to enable businesses to manage impact and risk more holistically, however, there are real issues with availability of data. Collaboration with government and statistics offices could help to align interests and improve data availability.
- Governments play a key role in collecting business data in a format that can be useful to multiple audiences, including business and government.
- It is important to cover the full range of sustainable development issues, including areas such as governance, rule of law and contribution to job creation and wellbeing. This aligns with current proposals around the SDGs.
- There is seen to be a strong potential for partnership between business and government to provide improved information to underpin implementation of the SDGs, enable both sets of actors to contribute to their successful delivery.

#### Next steps to increase alignment

- Dutch statistics authority (CBS) volunteered to share work they are currently conducting to map GRI indicators with Dutch national accounting measures.
- The work of the [Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force](#) on Measuring Sustainable Development could be scaled up to to the global level.
- It was proposed that work should be taken forward through a joint collaboration between the UNSD and the MWM project consortium, leading to a conference later in 2014 or early 2015.
- Participants considered the alignment of business accounting and macro accounting using the SEEA framework as an important stream of work and expressed their interest in being informed on progress made in this area of work.