

UNITED NATIONS  **NATIONS UNIES**

2016 SDMX EXPERT GROUP MEETING

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Welcome remarks

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Distinguished SDMX Experts,

Dear Colleagues,

In my capacity as the current Chair of the seven SDMX Sponsor Agencies, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you all to the 2016 SDMX Expert Group Meeting. I would also like to express my gratitude to our friends and colleagues from Mexico's INEGI, with whom we work so closely in many areas and who have kindly agreed to be the host of this event – Muchas gracias! And I would also like to gratefully acknowledge our colleagues from the OECD, for their effort of organizing and preparing this meeting.

This Expert Group Meeting comes at a time of great transformation. A year ago, in September 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, were adopted by Heads of States and Governments at the United Nations General Assembly. This is the largest development programme in history, and of course for its implementation, high quality and timely data play a central role. Thus, the statistical and information communities are called upon to make an important contribution.

Indeed, the SDGs succeeded the Millennium Development Goals, which made enormous progress in areas such as combating poverty and disease, improving child and maternal health, and achieving universal education and gender equality. And an important aspect of the MDGs was the attention they brought to statistics. It became clear how important data was in focusing the world's attention on a set of clear, achievable, measurable goals, and how crucial statistics was to monitoring progress.

SDGs is an even larger and more ambitious global undertaking which is truly universal, taken on by developing and developed countries alike. SDGs can never hope to be successful without a robust and global statistical infrastructure supporting it. Indeed there is now a universal agreement on the need to strengthen the capacities of national statistical systems as a pre-requisite to the success of the Programme. Statistics is firmly a part of the overall international Development Agenda.

In the meantime, rapid technological development has led to what is called a “Data Revolution”. The production of data is growing at an exponential rate, with private and unconventional sources playing an ever more important role. New, previously unheard-of opportunities are opening up, and policy-makers across the world place increasing expectations on statisticians in terms of data availability, timeliness, and quality. Their demands are echoed by the private sector and the public. New methodologies and new ways of doing business are necessary, and national statistical systems are seizing this opportunity to transform themselves in order to embrace the data revolution, in partnership with relevant data stakeholders. Ever more efficient data flows are a critical element of this modernization and transformation process.

This is where SDMX, and thus YOU come in.

It is against these global developments that the SDMX Expert Group Meeting 2016 brings together experts from National Statistical Offices, Central Banks, other government institutions, international agencies, and the private sector. The last few years have seen much progress in the SDMX world, with new tools being developed and data exchange ramping up. These developments could not be more timely.

In an environment where increased expectations are too often accompanied by reduced budgets, SDMX helps with reduction of the reporting burden. This has long been a concern of the statistical community, and SDMX finally offers a practical method of resolving the issue. Remarkably, this reduction of reporting burden is accompanied by a significant improvement in timeliness, one of the key demands of our users.

In a world where the volume of data is exploding, it is often more and more difficult to find data of interest and, once found, make sense of it. Not only are there a variety of coding systems and formats, their number seems to multiply by the day. SDMX brings structure to this increasingly disperse environment by promoting international standards and classifications.

SDMX is a rigorous standard. This makes it possible to impose strict requirements on the data in terms of quality and consistency. Implementation of SDMX has often spurred a cleanup exercise, which dramatically improved the quality and usability of disseminated data.

By now, SDMX has been implemented on a large scale. Europe is in the lead, where SDMX is a legal requirement and statistical agencies exchange and disseminate data from Census to Balance of Payments. But there is increased interest and, indeed, a flurry of activities in many of the world's countries. Recent initiatives in SDMX exchange of macroeconomic statistics, development indicators, education, labor statistics, and many others, extend far beyond the developed regions. This should not come as a surprise, for as we can see, SDMX enables statisticians to meet many of the challenges posed by the Data Revolution.

On Friday 21st October, the first meeting of the Working Group on SDMX for SDG Indicators will take place here in Aguascalientes. Like SDGs themselves, this initiative promises to become truly universal, bringing together developed and developing countries, international agencies, and private sector. Extending data exchange to all continents and all countries is certainly a challenge, but also a great opportunity to improve the very capacity that SDGs monitoring depends on.

Thank you and I wish you a successful and productive meeting.