Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators

WORKING GROUP ON SDMX

Draft Terms of Reference

I. Background

In September 2015, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and tasked the United Nations Statistical Commission, as a functional commission of ECOSOC, to develop the global indicator framework. The overarching principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is that no one should be left behind. "Data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts" is called for (A/RES/70/1).

In March 2015 at its forty-sixth session, the United Nations Statistical Commission created an Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), which is composed of representatives from a regionally-balanced group of Member States and includes regional and international agencies as observers. The group also invites as other key stakeholders, such as civil society, academia and the private sector, to attend its meetings and to provide inputs during consultations. The IAEG-SDGs was tasked with providing a proposal for a global indicator framework (and associated global and universal indicators) for the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda to be considered by the Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session in March 2016. At the forty-seventh session of the Commission, the Global indicator framework was agreed upon by Member States.

To ensure timely and efficient collection, validation, and dissemination of SDG indicators, a data exchange format needs to be agreed upon and used by SDG data providers. This will enable the automation of data exchange while simplifying and improving data validation and dissemination.

Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) is a standard sponsored by seven international organizations (BIS, ECB, Eurostat, OECD, IMF, UN, and WB). It was endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2008 as a preferred standard for data exchange and was approved as an ISO standard (ISO 17369:2013). It has been successfully used for data exchange and dissemination in areas such as Macro-Economic Statistics, International Merchandise Trade, and others, including MDG indicators.

Previously, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group for MDG Indicators (IAEG-MDGs) established an SDMX Task Team, which produced a Data Structure Definition and a draft Metadata Structure Definition for MDG Indicators, i.e., commonly agreed formats for the exchange of MDG indicators. These structures have been used by several international agencies to submit MDG indicators to UNSD for their inclusion in the MDG database and report, and were also used by UNSD to establish an exchange of development indicator data and metadata with 15 National Statistical Offices.

To facilitate the development of SDMX-based data and metadata exchange formats for SDG Indicators, a Working Group needs to be established by IAEG-SDGs.

II. Objectives and Tasks

1. *Development of global Data Structure Definitions and global Metadata Structure Definitions for SDGs.*

The purpose of the Working Group is to develop one or more global Data Structure Definitions (DSDs), specifying a uniform structure(s) and concept definitions for the transmission and dissemination of Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (SDGs), and to develop a Metadata Structure Definition (MSD) for the transmission of SDGs reference metadata.

The resulting global DSD and MSD for SDGs (further referred to as SDMX structures) will be made available through the SDMX Global Registry (SGR), and are expected to be adopted by those countries and international and regional organizations implementing the SDMX standard for the collection and/or dissemination of official SDGs data and metadata.

The SDMX Structures will support the transmission of all indicators and their disaggregation, as approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

2. *Scope of work.*

The Working Group aims to specify concepts, code lists, and structures for SDGs, and discuss and agree on arrangements for their maintenance.

The Working Group will decide which reference metadata concepts should be in the scope of a global MSD for SDGs. When defining a global MSD for SDGs, the Working Group will thoroughly review and take into account already available SDMX reference metadata structures, such as the MSD for MDG indicators.

The Working Group will also develop, pilot, and establish data exchange mechanisms for SDGs data. Members of the Working Group undertake to participate in pilot data exchange exercise(s).

III. Membership

The Working Group will be chaired by a member of the IAEG-SDGs, and will consist of statisticians and technical experts on SDMX from National Statistical Systems and International Organizations that are data providers of SDGs indicators, including former members of the SDMX Task Team of the IAEG-MDGs. UNSD will act as secretariat of the Working Group, provide support to the chair in ensuring the progress of work, and coordinate the development of SDMX structures and related infrastructure to support SDG data flows, as stipulated by the IAEG-SDGs.

Members of the Working Group will be nominated on the basis of their technical expertise and practical experience in (i) the compilation of data on development indicators and (ii) the design and implementation of SDMX artifacts.

Each participating country and organization is requested to nominate a focal point to facilitate the communication.

IV. Governance

The Working Group will report to the IAEG-SDG. Either the IAEG-SDGs or the Working Group may periodically update these Terms of Reference, subject to approval by the IAEG-SDGs.

UNSD will be the maintenance agency (custodian) of the global SDMX structures for SDGs, and will maintain them on behalf of the IAEG-SDGs. This includes the SDGs-specific concepts and code lists, as well as the responsibility for maintaining, updating, versioning, and retiring global SDMX structures for SDGs.

V. Organization of Work

The Working Group will take its decisions in the spirit of consensus and cooperation. Where a consensus cannot be achieved, decisions may be taken by majority, as a last resort. For major decisions regarding the development and maintenance of the SDMX artefacts for SDGs as well as data exchange, the IAEG-SDGs as well as its Working Group on Data Disaggregation will be consulted, as appropriate. Also, the SDMX secretariat, as well as the SDMX Technical Standards Working Group (SDMX TWG) and the SDMX Statistical Working Group (SDMX SWG), will be informed and consulted on technical matters as appropriate

The Working Group will decide on its detailed work plan, methods of work, and communication and coordination with other groups and countries. It is expected to conduct most of its work through a web-based collaboration platform and the use of phone and web meetings; however, face-to-face meetings will be held as appropriate.

VI. Time frame

The Working Group will identify the main milestones involved in developing a global SDMX implementation framework for SDGs, and will provide a time frame for their completion.

* * * *