UN Statistical System Organizations statement on Goal 15 at the 2nd IAEG-SDG Meeting

Bangkok, 26-28 October 2015

I would like to deliver a collective statement on Goal 15 on behalf of the Chief Statisticians of the UN System and particularly the organizations directly involved in producing and analyzing statistics related to this Goal, i.e. CBD, FAO, UNEP, UNFF, UNCCD, IUCN, UNODC, and OECD.

Target 15.1 is a very broad target, and many countries noted that despite being an established MDG indicator, forest area was insufficient to cover all aspects. Thus, we fully support the use of a second indicator on "protected area overlays with biodiversity". In response to Brazil's proposal, it is not possible to report based on phyto-physiognomy as this data is exceptionally rare and even if it were possible to collect, it would be a difficult indicator to interpret. FAO collects data from countries on 'Other Wooded Land' which increases the vegetated area covered, but it comes short of the suggested coverage of all natural vegetation. Mixing all vegetation types in such an indicator provides a weak measure of progress toward 15.1 that few countries could report on.

For target 15.2, some countries have proposed additional indicators on deforestation and restoration. Direct data on restoration are very rare, and we would suggest considering the alternative indicator proposed "carbon stocks in woody biomass", which reflects both forest extent and quality and thus addresses deforestation, restoration and afforestation.

For target 15.3, UNCCD and FAO have agreed to jointly monitor "trends in land degradation" as the only priority indicator for this target. The indicator will provide metrics on land use/cover, land productivity, and soil organic carbon stocks, building on the existing UNCCD monitoring and assessment mechanisms. It will therefore provide a more comprehensive picture of land degradation than the alternative proposed by some countries on percentage of degraded land.

Target 15.6 is an outcome level target. The CBD and FAO have jointly improved the previous indicator proposal which was a process-type indicator focused on ratifications of the Nagoya Protocol. The new proposal focuses on actual cases of access and benefit-sharing, and is therefore an outcome level indicator much more suitable to the target, in view of general principle that outcome targets should preferably use an outcome level indicator.

For target 15.7 and 15.c, in response to the concerns expressed by some countries on the feasibility of the indicator: "Ratio between detected illegal trafficking and legal trade in wildlife and wildlife products", we would like to clarify that the underlining data are already reported by Member States to CITES as part of their commitment to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, so the indicator per se is feasible. The construction of the indicator as such is new, but it has been tested by UNODC.

Target 15.8, "Adoption of national legislation relevant to the prevention or control of invasive alien species" is proposed as the only priority indicator […].

Target 15.9, "Progress towards national targets established in accordance with Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020" is proposed as the only priority indicator. This is an indicator under development by the Convention on Biological Diversity for assessing progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 which draws on already existing reporting processes.

On target 15.a, "Official development assistance in support of the CBD" is retained as the priority indicator proposal. While several countries have expressed understandable concerns with the indicator, it is at present practically the only useable and readily available international data on financial flows relevant to the target. In the medium term it should be possible to fill existing data gaps, and to extend the coverage of flows to non-concessional official finance and to private finance stimulated by official action. Extending coverage to all financing, including national, regional and local public and private finance, that promotes biodiversity or ecosystem health, is a possibility in the longer term, but would require both definitional work and substantial new data collection at country level.

Thank you Madame Co-Chair