

**Ninth Meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group
on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators**

26-28 March 2019

Venue: United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Western Asia
Beirut, Lebanon

Report

I. Introduction

1. The ninth meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) took place from 25-28 March 2019 in Beirut, Lebanon. The meeting was hosted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA). An IAEG-SDG member meeting took place on 25 March 2019, followed by a plenary session, attended by all participants, on 26-28 March 2019.

2. The main objectives of the meeting were to: i) review the tier classification of indicators; ii) review the progress made on the remaining tier III indicators; iii) begin work on the 2020 comprehensive review, including developing a detailed timeline and process; iv) discuss the progress made by the work stream on data disaggregation; v) share experiences on implementing monitoring of the SDGs, particularly as it relates to the development of national data platforms; and discuss other related issues.

3. At the plenary session, Mr. Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA, opened the meeting and welcomed participants to Beirut. Mr. Tabet highlighted the importance of data in driving policy decisions and that data availability remains a challenge, particularly in the UNESCWA region. He also stressed that it is imperative that no one is left behind in the 2030 Agenda and explained how the work of regional commissions contributes to this goal. Mr. Enrique Ordaz, co-chair of the IAEG-SDGs and Ms. Francesca Perucci, Chief of the Development Data and Outreach Branch of the United Nations Statistics Division, also offered opening remarks expressing gratitude to UNESCWA for hosting the meeting. The meeting was attended by over 130 participants, including representatives from 23 member countries of the IAEG-SDGs, 15 observer countries, 34 regional and international organisations, and over 21 civil society organisations, academia and the private sector.

4. Mr. Enrique Ordaz of Mexico, co-Chair of the IAEG-SDGs announced this would be his final meeting as co-Chair of the group, as he has completed two terms, and introduced

Ms. Viveka Palm of Sweden as the next co-Chair of the IAEG-SDGs, replacing him at the end of May 2019. Both Mr. Ordaz and Ms. Palm chaired the meeting, assisted by UNSD staff as Secretariat. Ms. Albina Chuwa of the United Republic of Tanzania and the other co-Chair of the group was unable to attend the meeting due to issues regarding her travel.

5. All documents of the meeting, including presentations for each agenda item and statements are available on the website of the 9th meeting of the IAEG-SDGs (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-09/>).

II. Update on latest events and on the work of the IAEG-SDG working groups

6. Agenda item 2 was introduced by the Secretariat, who provided a summary of the key decisions reached at the 50th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2019. Among other decisions, the Commission endorsed the “Criteria for the implementation of the guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals.”

7. Agenda item 3 included updates on the progress made by the three working groups of the IAEG-SDGs: SDMX, Geospatial information and Interlinkages, as well as the report by the High-Level Group on Partnership, Coordination and Capacity Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda (HLG-PCCB). All presentations for this agenda item (3) are included on the meeting website.

III. SDG Implementation and Monitoring – Voluntary National Reviews

8. Agenda item 4 included four presentations by countries and stakeholders highlighting their experiences participating in the preparatory processes for the voluntary national reviews (VNRs) that are submitted to the High-Level Political Forum. Three countries presented on how they participated in the preparations of the voluntary national reviews and how the national statistical office is engaging in the process, while the fourth presentation was on stakeholder engagement in the VNR process. These presentations highlighted the importance of developing partnerships between different government agencies to work together to draft the VNRs. Several countries also highlighted their data platforms and data visualizations that can provide readers of VNRs with additional statistical information on the country’s progress towards the SDGs. All presentations for this agenda item (4) are included on the meeting website.

IV. Review of Tier I and II indicators missing data and/or metadata

9. Agenda item 5 reviewed all Tier I and II indicators that are either missing data in the Global Indicator Database or metadata in the Metadata Repository. The Secretariat presented a review of these indicators and highlighted that while 56 indicators were initially identified that met these criteria, upon a more comprehensive review and after consultations with custodian agencies, it was determined that many of these indicators lacked data and/or

metadata because they were recently reclassified from Tier III to Tier II and data collection was just commencing. There was, however, a small sub-set of these indicators (a total of 12) that require additional follow-up, and the IAEG-SDG will request custodian agencies to either provide the missing data/metadata or indicate their plans for data collection by the end of May 2019. Webex meetings may be set up with the custodian agencies to discuss these indicators and if the IAEG-SDGs determines that there are serious issues with data collection for the indicator or if no response is provided by the custodian agencies, these indicators will be included in the 2020 Comprehensive Review.

10. After this presentation, several custodian agencies reiterated that, in many cases, the reclassification of the indicators occurred recently and that data collection efforts are ongoing. The Co-Chair of the IAEG-SDGs suggested that a future Webex meeting on several of these indicators could help to resolve many of these issues.

V. Review of progress on methodological development of Tier III indicators

11. Agenda item 6 reviewed updates to Tier III workplans based on a request that was sent to custodian agencies in February 2019 to provide a detailed timeline for the completion of the methodology and expected data coverage and frequency of data collection. Out of the 41 indicators that were classified as Tier III in February 2019, 7 were proposed for Tier reclassification at the 9th IAEG-SDG meeting, 20 provided updated information for their Tier III work plans and 14 did not provide any updated information. It is important to note that some of these 14 indicators are still orphan indicators or have encountered methodological problems that have caused the development of the indicator to stall. A complete list of all indicators included in this analysis and the results can be found on the website of the 9th IAEG-SDG meeting. The group indicated that indicators whose methodological work is not likely to be completed by late-2019 will be included in the 2020 comprehensive review, as will indicators for which data availability is unlikely to occur in a timely manner. Finally, the IAEG-SDGs will consider the possibility of using the already agreed global proxies as possible replacements for some Tier III indicators that have not made sufficient methodological progress.

12. After the introductory presentation from the Secretariat, UNFCCC, UNEP and UNWTO made presentations on the status and plans for Tier III indicators for which they serve as custodian agencies. UNFCCC highlighted that it would propose to replace many of the indicators under Goal 13 based on the discussions and outcomes of the COP24 meeting in December 2018, and UNEP presented an update on the methodological development of all Tier III indicators for which it serves as custodian agency. UNWTO also highlighted that it will propose a replacement indicator for two tourism indicators that are currently Tier III and will submit more detailed information to the Secretariat to share with the IAEG-SDG. All presentation items for this agenda item (6) are included on the meeting website.

VI. Tier reclassification requests of Tier III indicators

13. Agenda item 7: The reclassification requests of 9 Tier III indicators/sub-indicators were discussed:

- i. *4.2.1* – Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex
- ii. *8.4.1/12.2.1* – Material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP
- iii. *10.3.1/16.b.1* – Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law
- iv. *14.7.1* – Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries
- v. *16.1.2* – Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause
- vi. *16.6.2* – Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services
- vii. *16.7.1(b)* – Proportion of positions in national and local public institutions including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups
- viii. *16.7.1(c)* – Proportion of positions in national and local public institutions including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups
- ix. *16.7.2* – Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group

14. The custodian agencies for each indicator made brief presentations on the progress made on the methodology and why the indicator was ready to be reclassified as Tier II. After each presentation and a brief discussion on the indicators, the IAEG-SDGs members decided to reclassify all indicators except for the part of indicator 4.2.1 that addresses the development of children aged 0-23 months. As a result, indicator 4.2.1 is now a multi-tier indicator (Tier II/III), with the Tier II portion of the indicator referring to children 24-59 months of age. In addition, while the IAEG-SDG agreed to reclassify indicator 8.4.1/12.2.1, they mentioned that this reclassification is only for monitoring the indicator at the global level and not for country level data.

15. All presentations for this agenda item (7) are included on the meeting website. In addition, all indicator changes are reflected in the tier classification document found on the following website: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/>.

VII. Data disaggregation and SDG implementation and monitoring- data disaggregation case studies and best practices

16. Agenda item 8, on data disaggregation, was introduced by the Secretariat and highlighted the recent work of the IAEG-SDG on data disaggregation, including the background document to the 50th session of UNSC, the accompanying matrices, and an overview of the policy priorities for different vulnerable population groups. The future work plan on data disaggregation was also presented, and the IAEG-SDG plans to revise and update the technical document on data disaggregation and develop guidelines, tools and methodologies for data disaggregation to build national capacities. This presentation also briefly mentioned that a handbook on data disaggregation is being prepared by the Asian Development Bank based on the outcome of a workshop that took place in January 2019 and this handbook will be shared with countries and regional commissions upon its completion.

17. After this presentation, several countries and agencies expressed support for the handbook, while also stressing that it is important to proceed with caution and moderation when discussing data disaggregation with countries because disaggregation puts a significant financial and capacity burden on countries and suggesting countries need to disaggregate by many dimensions may place too much pressure on countries.

18. Agenda item 9 included five presentations by countries, agencies and stakeholders highlighting data disaggregation case studies and best practices in SDG implementation and monitoring. Presentations provided information on: the methodological work that is ongoing to develop definitions for urban and rural that can be used to disaggregate indicators; ongoing work to be able to disaggregate environmental indicators by ecosystem, taxon, and other dimensions; how civil society is working to ensure that more and more data and indicators are disaggregate by persons with disability; and a presentation from Brazil on their ongoing work to produce disaggregated data for the SDG indicators. All presentations for these agenda items (8 and 9) are included on the meeting website.

VIII. Proxy indicators

19. Agenda item 10 provided a brief overview to meeting attendees of the work the IAEG-SDG undertook to identify the global proxies to use for immediate monitoring for some Tier III indicators that were presented at the 50th session of UNSC in March 2019. The IAEG-SDG identified 11 possible global proxies that could temporarily be used for global monitoring while methodological work on 9 Tier III indicators concludes. A full list of these proxy indicators is available on the meeting website.

IX. 2020 Comprehensive Review

20. Canada, an IAEG-SDG member, presented an overview of the criteria and process for the 2020 Comprehensive Review, outlining the guiding principles for the review, what types of changes will be included, criteria for the review of the indicators and a detailed timeline,

including the timing of when consultations with other parties will take place. The guiding principles of the review include the consideration of investments already made at the national and international levels, while not undermining on-going efforts; that the revised framework should not significantly impose an additional burden on national statistical work, allowing for space for improvements while maintaining the same size as the current framework. The modifications of the framework during the 2020 comprehensive review will include the replacement, deletion, refinement or adjustment of indicators, and in a few selected cases, additional indicators, based on established criteria by the IAEG and outlined in the presentation. The presentation for this agenda item (10) is included on the meeting website.

21. Discussion following the presentation focused on what opportunities non-IAEG-SDG member States, international and regional organizations, and other stakeholders would have to contribute to the Comprehensive Review, including the submission of proposals to be included in the Review. The IAEG-SDGs highlighted that there would be an open consultation on the Comprehensive Review, open to all interested participants, that would commence at the end of July and run through August, and this would be the main opportunity for participation in the review. It was also mentioned that countries should contact the IAEG-SDG member that represents their sub-region to provide suggestions directly to the IAEG-SDG, and that the IAEG-SDG would consult with custodian agencies and other experts throughout the entire 2020 Comprehensive Review process.

X. Household surveys and data collection for SDG indicators

22. Ms. Francesca Perucci of UNSD and Mark Hereward of UNICEF introduced the work of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Household Surveys. This brief introduction reviewed the work of the group and what the group hopes to achieve in the medium-term. After this brief introduction, there were two country presentations: one from Ghana and another from Samoa, on how they are using household surveys to collect data to monitor the SDGs. In the presentation by Ghana, the presenter highlighted that Ghana conducted a mapping exercise, mapping all SDG indicators to the data sources used to collect the information and concluded that about a third of indicators use data only from censuses and surveys, while a further 10 per cent rely on a combination of survey data and administrative data. Samoa also highlighted how they are using household surveys to compile information to monitor the SDGs, while also stressing the capacity constraints they face, especially as a small island developing State. All presentations for this agenda item (12) are available on the meeting website.

XI. Data validation procedures and other data sources

23. Agenda item 13 was briefly introduced by the co-Chair and then UNCCD and UNDP made brief interventions highlighting some of the challenges they are facing with data validation and the use of non-official data sources for SDG monitoring and requested the IAEG-SDGs views on these two items. UNCCD presented the case of requesting countries to

validate data for an indicator on land degradation and the fact that, even with several reminders, a substantial proportion of countries did not respond to these requests.

24. Several countries responded to this presentation by highlighting the burden they face validating these indicators and the fact that the requests for validation do not always go to the correct office or individual. Several other countries mentioned UNICEF and the platform they use to validate data as a model that could be implemented by other custodian agencies. After a lengthy discussion, the Secretariat attempted to summarize the main points by highlighting the need to standardize the validation requests (possibly using UNICEF's method as a model) and developing some common approaches. The Co-Chair of the IAEG-SDGs also suggested that NSOs and others attempt to use generic email addresses as much as possible, as this allows multiple people to review the emails and mitigates the risk of completely losing communication when one person moves on from a particular job. The presentation for this agenda item (13) is included on the meeting website.

XII. SDG implementation and monitoring- case studies and best practices

25. Agenda item 14 included five presentations by countries and agencies highlighting case studies and best practices in SDG implementation and monitoring, with a focus on data validation systems and SDG reporting platforms. UNICEF presented on their data validation consultation that was mentioned several times during the previous agenda item and highlighted some lessons learned and ways to improve the exercise. Ireland presented its SDG data portal, which integrates geospatial information and SDG indicators to allow people to view maps that highlight geographic disparities. UN-Water presented its data portal, where information on SDG 6 indicators can be found. UNESCWA's Statistics Division highlighted some of the work it is undertaking to ensure data and statistics are available to monitor the SDGs. This includes assessing country capacity and conducting a variety of capacity building workshops on topics ranging from data disaggregation to using big data for SDG monitoring. Finally, Save the Children presented its Child Inequality Tracker, which highlights inequalities in several children's well-being indicators. All presentations for this agenda item (14) are included on the meeting website.

XIII. Work plan and next steps

26. The IAEG-SDGs work plan for remainder of 2019 was presented as the final agenda item of the meeting by the Co-Chair of the group. A summary of the key items in the work plan are included below and the presentation for agenda item 15 is also available on the meeting website. Web meetings of the IAEG-SDGs will be posted on the following website: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>. For tier reclassification requests, please see the following website for the dates of Webex meetings, deadlines to submit request and to download the template for the requests: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/>.

27. The work plan of the IAEG-SDG for the remainder of 2019 includes work in 4 key areas: Review of workplans of tier III indicators, 2020 Comprehensive Review, Data Disaggregation, and the Working Groups of the IAEG-SDGs. The key tasks under each work area are included here:

Review the workplan of Tier III Indicators

- Continue the review of workplans for tier III indicators and reclassify indicators when requirements are met;
- Follow up with agencies regarding timeline of methodological development, but also specific plans of data production, dissemination and associated strategies. Indicators for which updates are not received by end of May 2019, will be considered for the 2020 Comprehensive Review.
 - Indicators whose methodological work are not likely to be completed by late 2019 or indicators that are not likely to have data available in a timely manner will be included in the 2020 Comprehensive Review.
 - Some already agreed global proxies can be considered as possible replacements for Tier III indicators that have not made sufficient methodological progress.

2020 Comprehensive Review

- Carry out the comprehensive review on replacement, deletion, refinement or adjustment of indicators and, in a few selected cases, additional indicators, and prepare proposals for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its fifty-first session in 2020;
- The comprehensive review will be based on principles and criteria agreed by the IAEG-SDGs;
- An open consultation will be carried out in end-July – August 2019 on a set of initial proposals;
- By end-November 2019, the IAEG-SDGs will prepare the final proposal for the 2020 review and submit it to the Statistical Commission.

Data Disaggregation

- Continue the work stream on data disaggregation in order to provide further guidelines and liaise with the other working groups (i.e., SDMX, geospatial information) for the data disaggregation work;
- Revise and update the technical document on data disaggregation;
- Develop guidelines on tools and methodology for data disaggregation to build national capacities;
- Keep in mind that specific dimensions for disaggregation are defined by country needs, priorities and circumstances.

Working Groups

- Continue the work of the three working groups and review their terms of reference and workplans to ensure that they are in line with the work and requests of the IAEG-SDGs.
 - *Geospatial Information*
 - IAEG-SDGs will prepare specific guidelines and instructions for the Working Group and suggests the group to revise its TORs, memberships and work programme;
 - *SDMX*
 - IAEG-SDGs requests the group to refine the TORs to more concretely define its work programme, building on the work that has already been done;
 - *Interlinkages*
 - The group will revise the TORs and focus efforts on drafting the practical guidance documents.

28. The presentation of the work plan also mentioned that the 10th meeting of the IAEG-SDGs is expected to take place in October 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Annex 1 – Agenda

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Statistics Division

STA/441/2/162A
18 March 2019

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

26 – 28 March 2019

Venue: Main Conference Hall

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
Beirut, Lebanon

Plenary Session Provisional Agenda

Tuesday, 26 March 2019

*Registration and collection of badges for IAEG-SDG observers and other stakeholders
(8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)*

Morning session (9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)

For information:

1. Opening session (9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.)

Chair: Mr. Juraj Riecan, Director of Statistics Division, UNESCWA

Speakers:

- Mr. Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
- Ms. Francesca Perucci, Chief of Development Data and Outreach Branch, United Nations Statistics Division
- Co-Chair of the IAEG-SDGs

2. Update on decisions from 50th Session of UNSC (9:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.)

3. Updates on the work of the High-Level Group on Partnership, Coordination and Capacity Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda and of the three working groups of the IAEG-SDGs: SDMX, Geo-spatial information and Interlinkages (9:45 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.)

Coffee Break (10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)

For discussion:

4. SDG implementation and monitoring – VNRs (11:00 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.)

Lunch (12:45 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.)

Afternoon session (2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

5. Review of Tier I and II indicators missing data and/or metadata (2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.)
6. Review of progress on methodological development of Tier III indicators (3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

Wednesday, 27 March 2019

Stakeholder Briefing (8:15 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)

Morning session (9:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.)

7. Tier classification of indicators (9:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)
 - Review of requests for reclassification of Tier III indicators

Coffee Break (11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.)

7. Tier classification of indicators (11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.)
 - Review of requests for reclassification of Tier III indicators

Lunch (12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.)

Afternoon session (1:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

8. IAEG-SDG work stream on Data disaggregation (1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.)

- Proposed plan of work for data disaggregation

9. SDG implementation and monitoring – data disaggregation (2:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.)

10. Proxy Indicators (4:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

Thursday, 28 March 2019

Morning session (8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.)

*** SPECIAL SESSION: SDG DATA USER ENGAGEMENT (8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.) ***

11. 2020 Comprehensive Review (9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)

- Presentation of detailed timeline for 2020 Comprehensive Review
- Criteria for the inclusion of indicators in the 2020 Comprehensive Review

Coffee Break (11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.)

12. Household surveys and data collection for SDG indicators (11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.)

Lunch (12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.)

Afternoon session (1:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

13. Data validation procedures and other data sources (1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.)

14. SDG implementation and monitoring – other topic case studies and best practices
(2:45 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.)

15. Work plan and next steps (3:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.)

16. Other business / Closing (4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.)

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