Inter-agency Meeting on Preparation for the 2018 SDG Reports
28 February - 1 March 2018
Venue: UN Headquarters (New York), Conference Room 5

Report of the Meeting

I.   Introduction

1. The Inter-agency Meeting on Preparation for the 2018 SDG Reports took place on 28 February-1 March 2018 at UN Headquarters. The meeting was hosted by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, and was attended by approximately 40 experts from international agencies and regional organizations.

2. The main objective of the meeting was to convene focal points and other involved participants from the international agencies responsible for contributing data and storylines on the SDG indicators presented in the 2018 SDG global reports (Secretary-General and glossy report) and global SDG indicator database to 1) review inputs received by the submission deadline (16 February), identify gaps in inputs (both storyline and data) and brainstorm on the content and main messages of storylines to include in the reports; 2) discuss any technical issues regarding data and data/metadata sharing for the SDG indicators and 3) discuss possible strategies for collaboration and coordination moving forward.

3. Ms. Francesca Perucci provided opening remarks, welcoming the agencies to the meeting, and noted the important opportunity for exchange and discussions on not only the SDG reports, but also collaboration and technical issues related to monitoring the SDG indicators.

4. All documents and presentations from the meeting are available at the following website: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/meetings/sdg-inter-agency-meeting-2018/.

II.   Preparation of the Secretary General's 2018 SDG Progress Reports and review of inputs received and identification of gaps

5. UNSD provided a presentation on the preparation of the 2018 SDG Progress Reports, highlighting the mandate, objective and scope of the reports; reviewing in particular changes introduced this year for the glossy report. Both reports will link to the overarching theme of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2018: *Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.* The glossy report will cover in-depth only those Goals under HLPF review (Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 and 17) instead of covering all Goals as in past practice and will be launched in June. The Secretary-General's report will continue to include information for all Goals. UNSD also presented the timeline for the production of the reports and other outputs and reviewed those data and storyline inputs that are currently still outstanding. Further information can be found in the presentations under agenda items 2 to 4, available on the website.

6. The main discussions points raised following the presentations were:

   a. The possibility of changing the format of the meeting to only one day to review the Reports at this time of year and the possibility of adding one day to the IAEG or other meeting later in the year to discuss the technical items and topics that are planned for the second day.

   b. For the Secretary-General's report, the focus is only on the Tier I and II indicators, whereas there is more flexibility for the glossy report to include some Tier III indicators, in particular for Goals where a majority of indicators are still Tier III.

   c. UNSD noted the importance of providing inputs based on the format requested, in particular that agencies provide 1) a short summary description, 2) link to additional information/sources and 3) the data (national data, regional and global aggregates) for all indicators. For Goals under HLPF review, agencies were requested to additionally provide 5) a longer storyline with 6) chart (in Excel or other format).

   d. Reviewing the timeline for validation of the data and submission, it was noted that in order to meet the yearly February deadline (which is based on the HLPF submission deadlines), agencies will need to begin validation much sooner.

   e. There was a question regarding whether the HLPF in 2019 will be held twice, since it would be under the auspices of ECOSOC and the General Assembly. In 2019, the HLFP will be held for eight days in July (similar to the yearly schedule), but will also have a two-day meeting in September under the General Assembly. The report will not have an adjusted schedule and will be made available for the July meeting.

   f. Additional questions were raised regarding the following: inputs used for the reports; aggregations at regional and global level; the use of the new SDG regions; and ways to include more information in the two reports using different approaches to deal with the word and space limitations.

   g. Agencies responsible for data and storylines under HLPF review (Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 and 17) then provided updates on the inputs and key messages that were submitted, in particular highlighting links to the HLPF theme.

7. Data and/or storylines for approximately 100 indicators had been received by the deadline or shortly thereafter. UNSD expressed extreme appreciation for the agencies' work in providing inputs by the deadline.

III. Discussion on HLPF theme story (Cross-cutting storyline) and Data Story

8. UNSD provided a presentation on the HLPF theme story, noting what was included in the glossy report last year for this item and the request for inputs this year. Inputs are requested to focus on the HLPF theme: *Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies,* connecting the HLPF Goals under review (Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 17) or tie to the theme if the input connects to other Goals. Particularly, input related to the following is much appreciated: water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainable cities and communities; sustainable consumption and production; inequalities within and between countries.

9. UNSD also presented the topic and outline for the data story for the SDG report: "Strengthening SDG reporting and data exchange". The section will focus on national reporting capacity building, data dissemination and use and aims to provide actual examples of national reporting, dissemination initiatives and improved data exchange.

10. Some possible inputs that were discussed included: 1) UN-Water synthesis report information on the role of water in other Goals; 2) UN Environment information on sustainable consumption and production; and 3) WHO information on gender and inequalities between countries.

11. Further information on the HLPF theme story and data story can be found in the presentations on agenda item 5 available on the website.

IV.   Review of data/metadata inputs for the database, SDMX exchange and the new global indicator database interface

12. UNSD gave a review of data and metadata inputs to the database provided by agencies, and highlighted the main change in process this year, which was that agencies received a pre-filled template for the data, which will aid in data processing and ensure more accuracy of data transfer and retention of certain information from year to year.

13. Data for global and regional aggregates should be provided for at least the following years (to the extent possible): 2000, 2005, 2010 and the most recent year. For all data (country, regional and global aggregates), agencies are encouraged to provide data for all years starting with 2000 when possible. The team is exploring collecting data on an ongoing basis and considers plans to have data releases at specific intervals throughout the year (2-4 times a year).

14. UNSD noted that the Statistical Annex for the Secretary-General's report will only include Tier I and II indicators as well as source information.

15. The main discussion points raised following the presentation were:

    a. Request for guidance on how to submit data at various intervals throughout the year.

    b. It is not currently possible to take two values; in general agencies add a footnote and include the additional data point there. Issues include how to communicate to users, what to do with two values and the data structure.

    c. SDG regional groupings when dealing with donor countries and having the total add up correctly accounting for all categories and not confusing user. This is particularly challenging for OECD.

    d. The metadata template was revised last year to include information on data compilation and data quality; the template has not changed since then.

    e. The entire database can be downloaded in CSV/Excel. In addition, an API is available for the database.

16. UNSD also provided a presentation on the SDMX pilot exchange as well as the new global indicator database interface. Discussion following the SDMX presentation included: 1) understanding the limits and possibilities of the data structure definitions for countries and agencies; 2) the selection of the 20-30 indicators for the pilots, based on data availability; and 3) the need to continue dialogue and develop best practice guidelines.

17. A test version of the new global indicator database interface was also presented, with a demonstration of the webpage for participants. Discussion focused on: 1) ensuring that metadata will also be available soon on the API, although there is ongoing work for the agreement of basic terms; 2) the possibilities for analysis now that the new interface includes tools to more readily analyze across indicators; and 3) launch of the interface, which should become available within the next two months.

18. Further information can be found in the presentations (data/metadata inputs and SDMX) on agenda item 6 available on the website.

V. Guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the SDGs

19. UNSD provided a presentation on the *Guidelines on data flows and global data report for the SDGs* drafted by the IAEG-SDGs, a background document for the upcoming 49th session of the UN Statistical Commission. The presentation highlighted the overarching principles in the guidelines (transparency, collaboration and communication and professional and scientific standards) as well as key points included in the document. Further information can be found in the presentation under agenda item 7 available on the website.

20. The main discussion points raised following the presentation were:

   a. The feasibility and other considerations of the use of national platforms (and metadata) from countries to extract data for the SDGs.

   b. The need to communicate and consult with countries for any adjustments made.

   c. The need for continued dialogue on whether data should be left empty when there is no agreement between countries and the custodian agencies or the data should be presented with a footnote with explanation in the global SDG database, in particular since the data will most likely be available in other databases.

   d. Best practices for including the NSO contact in communications with the countries.

   e. The resource implications of the guidelines document and limitations experienced by agencies.

   f. The short timeline for validation of data in order to meet the deadlines established for the SDG report and the requirements of the guidelines document.

VI. Methodological/technical issues related to SDG monitoring

21. Under this agenda item, UN Women and FAO provided presentations on specific examples of their experiences in the methodological development of SDG indicators, in particular for Tier III indicators. In addition, agency representatives from the ILO, UN Environment, WHO and the World Bank presented best practices, challenges and examples of calculating regional aggregates. Finally, UNSD provided information on regional groupings for discussion. Further information can be found in the presentations on agenda item 8 available on the website.

22. The main discussions points raised included:

   a. Regarding the process for tier re-classification, discussion included criteria for Tier re-classification and need for refinements; if a lack of data should prohibit an

upgrade; where or who is supposed to approve a standard; and concerns on the decision-making process and inconsistencies for some of the tier re-classifications.

b. Following the presentations on calculating regional aggregates, discussions focused on the need for agencies to share their experiences with one another on their aggregation methods in order to learn from one another; issues/challenges on reporting imputed data; request for guidance on aggregations, especially with regard to the inclusion of territories or uneven data for different time periods; the need for a task team to further elaborate the issues being raised, similar to one that existed for the MDGs; and Population Division has done an analysis of indicators using population data and can provide this information for the task team.

c. Participants agreed to create a task team to discuss and possibly provide guidance and/or best practices on calculating regional and global aggregates. Agencies that volunteered to be part of the task team included: FAO, UNIDO, UNESCO, UN Environment, ILO, World Bank, UN Women, WHO, DESA Population Division and UNICEF. Other agencies who didn't participate in the meeting can also join the task team if interested (see Follow-up/Next Steps below).

d. Geographical location is the primary classification used in the reporting, but given the context of the data, slightly different groupings may be highlighted, for instance Small island developing states when discussing disaster related indicators since they are often impacted more.

VII.   Collaborations and capacity building efforts to monitor the SDGs

23. In line with the agenda item on collaborations and efforts to monitor the SDGs, UNSD provided an overview on national data platforms, the e-handbook on SDG indicators and a research project on a federated system for the SDGs. UN Women, UNESCO and UN-Water provided presentations on thematic reporting for the SDGs. Regarding capacity building efforts, UNSD provided a presentation on activities currently being undertaken as well as a summary of the Global Network on Institutions for Statistical Training (GIST). Regional Commissions, UNECE and UN ECLAC provided information on capacity building activities in their regions. Further information can be found in the presentations on agenda item 9 and 10 available on the website.

24. Discussions highlighted:

a. Thematic reporting is helpful to understand why not achieving the outcome set in the Goals and therefore goes beyond the global indicators to provide that information and look from a different angle.

b. CCSA role in coordinating capacity building work across the UN system.

c. Many agencies have training courses or links to training institutions that could be of benefit to the GIST project.

VIII.   Engaging with the IAEG-SDGs

25. UNSD provided an overview of engagement with the IAEG-SDGs, in particular preparations for the upcoming 7th IAEG-SDG meeting and work going forward. Further information can be found in the presentation on agenda item 11 available on the website.

26. Discussions highlighted:

    a. The need for clarity on the criteria for tier reclassification and information on how to accelerate the process in order to have monitoring for the indicators that are still pending.

    b. The possibility of engaging with other UN bodies on international classifications and standards to assist the IAEG-SDGs with their review of the indicators.

IX.   Additional Information

Timeline for the 2018 SDG Reports:

2018 SDG Reports Timeline		
Validation/consultation of data with countries	**Summer/Fall 2017- February 2018**	
Short summary description storyline & National data, regional and global aggregates *(including short summary description for SG Report and Overview & all data)*	**16 February 2018 <u>for all Goals</u>**	
(Additionally) Storyline (longer) & charts with excel files (underlying data for charts)	**16 February 2018 for Goals under HLPF review (Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 17)**	
	SG official Report Deadline	**Glossy Report Deadline**
Editing	**March/April**	**March/April/May**
Submission deadline	**30 April**	**28 May**
Layout/Design	**May (UN Docs Control)**	**April/May**
Translation in all languages	**May (UN Docs Control)**	**April/May**
Printing	**Parliamentary Doc (UN Docs Control)**	**June**
Launch	**Available on UN website 6 weeks before HLPF (end of May)**	**18 June 2018**

Follow-up/Next Steps:
1. Any updates, changes or submissions of the **storyline, data, charts and metadata** should be sent **as soon as possible** to: **sdgindicators@un.org**
2. Agencies are kindly requested to send inputs for use in the **data story** to Ian Rutherford (rutherford@un.org) by **13 April 2018**.
3. If you are interested in joining the **task team on regional and global aggregates**, please kindly email Zin Lin (lin@un.org) and Heather Page (pageh@un.org) by **13 April 2018**.