



Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Statistics Division

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

“Informal meeting on measuring progress” 17 December 2013, New York

Report

Introduction

1. The informal meeting on measuring progress of the Open Working Group (OWG) of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 17 December. The OWG Co-Chair H.E. Mr. Csaba Körösi of Hungary opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The meeting was attended by OWG members, chief statisticians and representatives from national and international statistical offices as well as development experts from governmental organizations and the civil society.

2. The purpose of the meeting was to understand how statistics can support the OWG in its task of designing and proposing sustainable development goals and targets and to establish a dialogue between policy makers and statisticians in order to ensure the measurability of goals and targets. The presentations by the statistical experts during three sessions were followed by open discussions which included questions to and answers by the discussion panel consisting of session organizers and presenters. The agenda of the meeting is contained in Annex 1.

Opening

3. In his opening remarks the Co-Chair pointed out that when proposing SDGs the OWG would want to bear in mind that the SDGs will have to be monitored and progress will have to be evaluated. Monitoring and measuring is cutting across all issues discussed by the OWG and without effective monitoring, there will be no accountability. He pointed out the role and activities of the UN Statistical Commission in monitoring progress towards the achievement of the MDGs and that the statistical community has been concerned with the measurement of sustainable development, progress and human well-being since many years. Also, in 2013 the Commission established, based on the request made in the Rio+20 outcome document, a Friends of the Chair Group (FOC) to launch a programme of work on broader measures of progress and to provide support to the preparation of SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda. The FOC already have provided statistical

annexes to the issue briefs which provide a basis for the discussions during the thematic sessions of the OWG.

4. He indicated that advice from statistical experts on the following points would be appreciated: (i) differences of monitoring and reporting of relatively simple MDGs and the integrated SDGs; (ii) the relationship between the goals, targets and indicators; (iii) what should be measured on national, regional and global levels and where should be the relevant capacities built or allocated; (iv) necessary or still missing capabilities for developing a SDG focused monitoring, measuring and reporting system; (v) at what level can the differentiation of global SDGs been done for countries with different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities as indicated in para. 247 of the Rio+20 outcome document; (vi) assurance of the global transparency in implementation and measurement; and (vii) understanding of the data revolution in terms of statistical needs.

Presentations and discussion

5. The keynote address by Mr. Walter Radermacher, Chief Statistician of the European Union focused on “How can statistics assist in the design of the SDGs and post-2015 goals and targets”.

6. Mr. Philippe Cuneo, Director for Coordination and International Relations at the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) of France and Co-Chair of the Statistical Commission Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress (FOC) introduced the first session “Lessons learned from the monitoring of the MDGs and Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs)”. A first presentation on “Lessons learnt from national MDG monitoring” was made jointly by Mr. Shantanu Mukherjee, Team leader, UNDP MDG Team and Mr. Enrique Ordaz, Director General for Analysis and Research of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) of Mexico. A second presentation on “European experience in monitoring sustainable development – can it be an example?” was made by Ms. Marleen De Smedt, Advisor to the Director-General of the Statistical Office of the European Union and Mr. Francois Baumgartner, Deputy Director of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

7. In the subsequent discussion OWG members stressed the importance of measurable goals and targets for the work of the OWG, welcomed the involvement of statisticians to ensure measurability and the provision of statistical notes to the sixth OWG session and stressed the need for ongoing involvement of statisticians starting from March onwards. The following issues were raised: how to deal with the inter-linkages; how to achieve differentiation and flexibility on national level within a universal, globally relevant agenda while preserving measurability and comparability; the need for cost effective targets and indicators; capacity building for production and use of data; and possible goals, targets and indicators for sustainable consumption and production. It was clarified that the OWG works on the understanding that there will be one single agenda and that the post-2015 development agenda will be based on the OWG proposal of SDGs which will be provided by September 2014. Stefan Schweinfest, Acting Director of the UN Statistics Division, pointed out several possible elements of engagement between the OWG and the statistical community such as direct contacts between OWG members with

the chief statistician in their country, requests by the OWG to the Statistics Division, the statistical notes, the engagement of experts of the FOC when considering proposals for goals and targets and possibly, a joint session or agenda item of the OWG together with the Statistical Commission, which will hold its 45th session from 4-7 March 2014.

8. Mr. K.K. Lamba, Deputy Director General of the Central Statistical Office of India and Co-chair of the Statistical Commission Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress (FOC), introduced the second session on “Review of existing proposals and their statistical requirements”. Mr. Peter Harper, Deputy Australian Statistician from the Australian Bureau of Statistics gave a presentation on “Examining data needs – assessment and perspectives” per videolink. The second presentation was made by Mr. Rutger Hoekstra, Senior Statistical Researcher from Statistics Netherlands on “A statistical framework for measuring sustainable development – relevance for SDGs and post-2015 design?”

9. The third session “Roadmap for measurement” was introduced by Mr. Edwin St. Catherine, Director of the Central Statistical Office of St. Lucia. The first presentation on “Sustainable information for sustainable development – Need for capacity development” was made jointly by Mr. Jose Ramon G. Albert, Secretary-General of the National Statistical Coordination Board of the Philippines and Mr. Pali Lehohla, Statistician General of Statistics South Africa. A presentation on “Roadmap for a monitoring framework for the post-2015 development agenda” was made jointly by Mr. Johannes Jütting, Manager of the Secretariat of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) and Ms. Gabriella Vukovich, President of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and Chair of the Statistical Commission, who provided in her presentation also a summary of the conclusions of the meeting.

10. In the discussions of the second and third session, OWG members again expressed their appreciation of this dialogue with statisticians and pointed out the need to take into account national statistical capacity, data quality and availability and the need to involve statisticians early on, as one of the lessons learned from the MDG monitoring. Furthermore, the issue of flexibility in the measurement framework in order to accommodate country differences was raised again.

Closing remarks

11. The OWG Co-Chair H.E. Mr. Csaba Körösi of Hungary concluded the meeting with the following closing remarks:

1. The OWG recognizes the importance of considering measurement issues when making proposals for SDGs and targets. The OWG also recognises that a strong statistical support is required and will be required in all countries when we embark on this exercise to build goals and targets and indicators for their monitoring.
2. The OWG appreciates today’s dialogue with the statistical experts, takes note of and welcomes their offer and concrete proposals to further support the OWG in its task. This offer will be considered. I also recognize the appeal by the statistical

experts that there is a strong need for dialogue on national and regional levels between producers and users of data.

3. We feel the need to strengthen institutional capabilities in a great number of countries for producing and evaluating the data. That would require cooperation within the countries and the involvement of the national governments. It would also require cooperation among countries, including cooperation among the statisticians and measurement experts.

4. There was a very strong appeal from many that besides a single set of global goals and targets also a supplementary set of nationally and regionally relevant and applicable targets need to be considered.

5. The statistical community encouraged the OWG to understand, and at the same cautioned the OWG on the data revolution. Statisticians view such data revolution as a combination of the above dimensions and efforts, the application of national circumstances and relying on good quality data that are accessible, reliable, user friendly and supporting sustainable development implementation.

6. Two types of cooperation of statisticians in the process have been offered and can be envisaged: direct technical support to the OWG in its work on shaping measurable goals and targets; and a broader set of contributions which will be very useful when going for the post-2015 framework design which will actually be beyond the task of the OWG. That certainly will have to include the building of process monitoring, measuring progress and expert advice on capability development.

7. Reporting on progress will have to be designed according to international acknowledged standards but also designed and harmonized on national and other levels. This includes all stakeholders who will be involved in the implementation of the SDGs. In this context regions, cities and maybe even cooperate players were mentioned.

12. He expressed his hope that the dialogue that had started with this meeting would continue in the future. He thanked all presenters and participants and adjourned the meeting.

13. The presentations of the meeting are available at:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Dissemination/workshops/OWG_2013/default.html

14. The meeting is available for on demand streaming at <http://webtv.un.org>:

Morning (part 1)

<http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/other-meetingsevents/watch/part-1-informal-meeting-on-measuring-progress-open-working-group-on-sustainable-development-goals/2943948183001>

Afternoon (part 2)

<http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/other-meetingsevents/watch/part-2-informal-meeting-on-measuring-progress-open-working-group-on-sustainable-development-goals/2946776294001>

Annex 1 - Agenda

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals

“Informal meeting on measuring progress”

17 December 2013, Trusteeship Council

Agenda

10:00 – 10:15 *Opening remarks, Co-Chairs of the OWG*

10:15 – 10:35 *Keynote address: How can statistics assist in the design of the SDGs and post-2015 goals and targets? Walter Radermacher (Eurostat)*

10:35 – 13:00: Session 1 - Lessons learned from the monitoring of the MDGs and Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs)

10:35 – 10:40 *Introduction of topic by the panel organizer, Philippe Cuneo (INSEE, France)*

10:40 – 11:00 *Lessons learnt from national MDG monitoring, Jointly Shantanu Mukherjee (UNDP, MDG Team) and Enrique Ordaz (INEGI, Mexico)*

11:00 – 11:10 *European experience in monitoring sustainable development – can it be an example? Jointly Marleen De Smedt (Eurostat) and François Baumgartner (Swiss Federal Statistical Office)*

Discussion with the OWG

14:30 – 16:00: Session 2 - Review of existing proposals and their statistical requirements

14:30 – 14:35 *Introduction by the panel organizer, K.K. Lamba (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India)*

14:35 – 14:50 *Examining data needs – assessment and perspectives, Peter Harper (Australian Bureau of Statistics)*

14:50 – 15:05 *A statistical framework for measuring sustainable development – relevance for SDGs and post-2015 design? Chair of the UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development, Rutger Hoekstra (Statistics Netherlands)*

Discussion with the OWG

16:00 – 18:00: Session 3 - Roadmap for measurement

16:00 – 16:05 *Introduction by the panel organizer, Edwin St. Catherine (Central Statistical Office, Saint Lucia)*

16:05 – 16:30 *Sustainable information for sustainable development - Need for capacity development, Jointly Jose Ramon G. Albert (NSCB, Philippines) and Pali Lehohla (Statistics South Africa)*

16:30 – 16:55 *Roadmap for a monitoring framework for the post-2015 development agenda, Jointly Johannes Jütting (PARIS21) and Chair of the Statistical Commission, Gabriella Vukovich (Hungarian Central Statistical Office)*

Discussion with the OWG

Conclusion: the Co-Chairs of the OWG