

Information note regarding the ‘statistical notes’ to the OWG

(by UNSD, as of 7 January 2014)

1. **Background:** The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations General Assembly (OWG) is conducting a series of sessions in which a list of relevant issues is being discussed. For each of the issues the Technical Support Team (TST) under the umbrella of the UN System Task Team (UNTT) (which supports system-wide preparations for the post-2015 development agenda and consists of over 60 UN entities and agencies and international organizations) has been preparing an issue brief.

2. **Initiative and mandate:** The OWG co-chairs accepted the offer by the United Nations Statistics Division/Department of Social and Economic Affairs (UNSD) to provide statistical notes (or annexes) to all issue briefs. This initiative was supported by the co-chairs of the OWG at the fourth session of the OWG.¹

3. UNSD made this offer as the secretariat of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) which is the apex entity of the global statistical system and the intergovernmental focal point for the elaboration and the review of the indicators used in the United Nations system as indicated by Resolution A/RES/57/270 B of the General Assembly in 2003.

4. In its task UNSD is supported by the UNSC Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress (FOC) which has been mandated by the UNSC “to closely monitor the ongoing debate on development frameworks and to keep the Bureau of the Statistical Commission informed, undertaking an active dialogue with United Nations bodies and the policy sphere in order to ensure that a robust statistical measurement approach is incorporated from the outset in preparations for the post-2015 development agenda”. As part of this active dialogue the FOC is participating in the preparation of statistical notes (or annexes) to the issue briefs.

5. **Purpose and contents:** The statistical notes will provide the OWG with statistical background information on what data is or could be available to monitor possible goals and targets in the area covered by the respective issue brief, describing methodologies, data availability, data sources, and challenges and limitations. Hereby, the statistical notes also raise awareness for the need to consider statistical aspects (and to involve statisticians) in the design of the SDGs and the post-2015 development framework.

6. The individual issue briefs determine the scope of the respective statistical note. All statistical notes should follow the same structure and provide certain types of information (see annex). The statistical notes aim at providing an inventory of what data is or could be available to monitor goals and targets in a particular area in a comprehensive and neutral way. It is not the purpose of the statistical notes to recommend individual or particular sets of individual indicators (or goals and targets).

7. The statistical notes provide statistical background information to the OWG. However, they are also an information basis for any further input that might be required during the

¹ See the “Concluding Remarks of Co-Chairs”, tenth bullet, second sub-bullet:
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3693cochairsconcluding.pdf>

OWG and post-2015 processes. Furthermore, they provide a first input to the establishment of a monitoring framework for the SDGs/post-2015 development agenda.

8. Posting and approval: The statistical notes will be made available to the members of the OWG and are posted next to (below) the issue briefs on the website dedicated to the OWG.² Currently, the first drafts of the statistical notes are being made available. The intention is to provide the first drafts by the time the respective issue is discussed by the OWG. ‘Final’ versions should ideally become available by the time of the last meeting of the OWG scheduled on 3-7 February 2014 (and by 14 February the very latest). However, it is envisaged that depending on the requirements, the statistical notes will be revisited and revised or further elaborated after February.

9. The first drafts will be approved by the respective UNSD Chief of Branch or UNSD Front Office, depending on who is responsible for a particular statistical note, in consultation with the Director of UNSD who will be submitting the statistical notes to the OWG. For the February ‘final’ versions the same procedure is expected to be followed. The FOC on broader measures of progress is being involved in the review and approval process of the February ‘final’ versions. At its 45th session 4 to 7 March 2014, the Statistical Commission will have all available statistical notes before it for review.

10. Inclusive and cooperative drafting process: UNSD is organising the preparation of the statistical notes, with the active involvement of the FOC on broader measures of progress. The UN entities responsible for a particular statistical area should be involved and consulted in this process. The participation of individual entities might range from the provision of references on data sources to being the lead author on a particular statistical note. The drafting should be conducted in the spirit of cooperation, seeking the inclusion of all relevant inputs.

11. Currently, individual countries that are members of the FOC on broader measures of progress, organizations that are members of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) as well as statistical experts of the Technical Support Team (TST) are invited to contribute their statistical expertise in the drafting of the statistical notes. In case an organization has not yet been contacted, but would like to be involved in the drafting of a particular statistical note, it should contact the responsible Director or the Front Office of UNSD.³ The attached work plan contains the list of topics and indicates who is responsible at UNSD for organizing the drafting of a particular statistical note.

12. Being an inclusive drafting process, feedback and further contributions of other partner in development statistics will be considered also after the posting of the first draft.

² The statistical notes for the issues of the fifth session have been posted on the OWG website at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1665>. Statistical notes for all except one issue of the sixth session have been posted at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1678>. All statistical notes will also be provided on the website of the FOC at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/broaderprogress/default.htm>.

³ To facilitate the contacting of the respective responsible Branch, please see the following contact information:
○ ECONOMICS STATISTICS BRANCH (ESB): IVO HAVINGA, Chief of Branch, Tel: 212-963-4859, Email: havinga@un.org;
○ TRADE STATISTICS BRANCH (TSB): RONALD JANSEN, Chief of Branch, Tel: 212-963-5980, Email: jansen1@un.org;
○ DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS BRANCH (DSSB): KEIKO OSAKI-TOMITA, Chief of Branch, Tel: 212-963-8338, Email: osaki@un.org;
○ ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY STATISTICS BRANCH (EESB): ESZTER HORVATH, Chief of Branch, Tel: 212-963-4581, Email: horvath@un.org;
○ FRONT OFFICE (FO): MATTHIAS REISTER, Senior Statistician, Tel: 917-367-7098, Email: reister@un.org.

Annex

Suggested Template for the Statistical Notes

(by UNSD, as of 22 October 2013)

This template aims to ensure that all statistical notes follow a similar structure and cover certain important aspects, as applicable. The statistical notes should be aligned with the respective issue brief, be written for a non-technical (although very knowledgeable) audience and be very succinct and short, not exceeding 2-3 pages.

- 1) Main policy issues, potential goals and targets (based on analysis of HLP report and other reports)
 - Aligned with issue briefs
 - Point out linkages to other issues, the general policy framework or any relevant measurement framework, as applicable and appropriate
- 2) Conceptual and methodological tools
 - Availability
 - Gaps and what does it take to fill them
 - References
- 3) Existing and new indicators
 - What is out there to build on?
 - Relevant MDG indicators
 - Relevant international indicator sets
 - Relevant monitoring frameworks (with goals, targets and/or indicators)
 - Need for new indicators
 - References
- 4) Data requirements, challenges and limitations
 - Data availability (spatial, temporal and thematic coverage, data quality, disaggregation) and data sources
 - International
 - National
 - Data gaps and what does it take to fill them; Feasibility and resource requirements
 - References
- 5) Conclusions