

**Comments on the organization of the event of the OWG on 17 December  
and on the summary of contributions on the HLP Report**

(as of 6 November 2013)

<b>Australia</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Germany</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Hungaria</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>India</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>OECD</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Paris21</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Eurostat</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>UNECE</b>	<b>11</b>

## **Australia** (Brian Pink)

Thank you for preparing the summary of contributions received on the report of the high-level panel. I believe you have done a great job and Australia is happy with the summary.

Thank you also for preparing the draft concept note for the event on statistics for the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals which will take place on 17 December.

It seems to me that the 'big questions' we are asking are:

1. How do we ensure that the indicators chosen for the SDGs are statistically appropriate and able to be measured in practice, taking into account the current state of development of official statistics across the globe?
2. How can the capability and capacity of the official statistical system be built up, including active monitoring of progress? (In regard to the monitoring of progress, a question that could be asked is: Is there a role for an indicator on the progress of official statistics in the SDGs themselves and if so, how might this be progressed?)

I think the draft concept note deals with the second question reasonably well, but it could be sharpened to seek explicit answers to the first.

More broadly, it is not clear to me how the proposed "informal meeting" fits into the broader OWG processes. I agree that it is a good idea to conduct such an event, but there is a risk that if it is not part of a broader strategy of engagement then it will come and go without making much difference. I am a little concerned that the meeting will be held during the week following the main OWG meeting, which may restrict the opportunities to engage with the key players in the OWG process.

On a particular point, the concept note rightly talks about the need to consider the coordinating role of the Statistical Commission in setting up a global partnership in developing statistics. However, if such a partnership is to be successful I think there are broader governance and institutional issues that will need considering, particularly if substantial funding will be sought. (And I believe that substantial funding will be required to make a difference.) Interestingly, yesterday a UK think tank released a report calling for the creation of a new international agency, Worldstat, to carry out quality control on global statistics (see <http://www.nature.com/news/time-for-global-statistics-we-can-count-on-1.13948>).

I don't agree with the proposal, but it does exemplify the need to take a deep look at governance and institutional arrangement issues.

## **Germany** (Sibylle von Oppeln-Bronikow)

On behalf of Sibylle von Oppeln-Bronikowski I would like to respond to your email. Thank you very much for sending the documents.

1. We agree that our comments, as proposed in the "Comments on the Report of the High Level Panel ...", will be published on the FOC website.
2. As we see it, the document "Summary of FOC members' comments ...", which summarizes the comments for the Informal Meeting of the Open Working Group on 17 December 2013, includes all important aspects of the comments. Especially the highlighted headings allow the core of the messages to be quickly understood. Possibly, the main results could be underlined even more clearly by an adapted layout.

3. From a German point of view, we would like to make the following comments on the proposals of the Draft concept note for the OWG "Informal meeting on measuring progress" on 17 December 2013:

1. It is important to discuss in particular the role of the bodies of official statistics and their resources in the context of developing a new SDG/post 2015 concept.
2. We have no information on whether the OWG has in-depth knowledge. An experienced statistician would be helpful to explain briefly and concisely the relevance of the items mentioned.
3. On the whole we would recommend to start by defining simply a framework for procedural questions. In our view, details should be discussed more fully only in the course of determining content-related aspects such as the goals, targets and possible indicators. The reason is that the progress of the whole procedure and the further course of action – incl. the resources required in this context – might considerably depend on how many and what types of indicators, data sources and methodological standards will have to be newly developed or harmonized and coordinated.

### **Hungaria** (Vukovich Gabriella)

Thanks for the compilation of the comments.

We agree with the summary and also with the concept note.

### **India** (TCA Anant)

The summary of the contributions received from various countries and organizations captures the spirit of their views and cover all important points. Broadly we agree with the summary as well as draft concept note for the meeting of the OWG on Sustainable Development Goals to be held on December 17, 2013. I would like to make the following observations.

1. The emphasis on an early convergence of different frameworks at work is extremely important and central to our efforts. I think we should emphasise this in the meeting of OWG as well.
2. In addition, it would be useful if we seek to work towards developing a core list of critical indicators which could be agreed upon to facilitate global capacity building. Such a critical minimum set of indicators should be decided upon by the stake holders participating in the dialogue and as far as possible be included in the process of seeking country commitments. We may wish to develop a grading of statistical indicators into two or three tiers with the core minimal set being clearly identified. However, this exercise is viable only with the convergence noted earlier.

### **Italy** (Linda Laura Sabbadini)

We agree on the summary you propose, it can be therefore published as it is. Thanks for it.

With regards to the Draft concept note we have some questions regarding the event itself. It is not clear why it is an informal meeting, why it is not done back to back to the official OWG meeting but next week, who are expected to be the participants and what its role within the OWG works.

It's very important to understand these issues in order to finalize the contents of the meeting. We agree with Martine, we risk that the contents are too general, without informations on targets and goals. If we maintain the discussion only at general level it will be very difficult for us to give a useful contribution to the process. We need to develop a dialogue on concrete topics too.

## **The Netherlands** (Bert Kroese)

On behalf of Bert Kroese I would like to respond to your email. Thank you for the summary and the concept note for the event on statistics of the OWG.

I like to compliment you with the excellent summary. Statistics Netherlands is glad that the framework to measure sustainable development proposed by the joint UNECE/OECD/EUROSTAT Working Group is mentioned in the summary. The proposal to have more flexibility at the national level is important. However, there are more reasons to choose for this strategy than just because some targets are not relevant to all the developed, emerging and developing countries. In this context, I would like to stress that many NSI's have to deal with budget cuts in the future. These cuts may have consequences for our level of ambition.

The concept note of the meeting of the OWG looks fine to us. Is the summary of the FOC member's comments on the HLP Report one of the documents that will be sent to the OWG? In my opinion, this would be a good idea. Who will represent the 'statistics' during the OWG?

I'm hoping that you can send the guidelines as soon as possible, so that there will be enough time to prepare the background documents. Statistics Netherlands would like to contribute to subjects where our knowledge is appreciated most.

## **Sweden** (Viveka Palm)

Thank you for the material and the chance to contribute. We agree on the summary text, thanks for producing this!

On the event on statistics: We would need to know more about the plans for this event. How many are supposed to attend and who would be the organizers (UNSD?) and the presenters? Who is involved in planning it? Is it thought of as a seminar or as group discussions?

Also, the input to the OWG meeting – is it time to come up with that know for the one on sustainable economy, and do you see it so that we should all go through you? Have you received wishes from other countries about contributing to the different thematic meetings?

## **UK**

Sessions 2 refers to "setting up a global partnership in development of statistics...." and session 3 to "setting up of a global partnership on development data". The UK welcomes these discussions and notes the following points.

- There is no reference to existing structures. Our view is that a starting point for these discussions should be to review what partnerships already exist, what functions they perform and whether or not they could be adapted to play a role in the global partnership.
- To reinforce the points made by Eurostat and OECD, the UK feels it is vital to highlight the existing role that PARIS21 plays as the only internationally recognised body co-ordinating and implementing statistical capacity development in low income countries.

## **USA** (William Sonntag)

Once again the scope of the proposed meeting is broad though your commentary on comments to date seems to emphasize very real concerns about rigorous practice in this area that must be discussed. From the perspective of the USEPA there is concern that the environmental sustainability aspect of this statistics and metrics agenda needs to be brought to the fore. Environmental assessment techniques, observations systems and global platforms and initiatives need to inform both the choice of goals and indicators but also be engineered to support their statistical basis. This understanding of needed integration must be a part of partnerships and deliberations fully leveraging and integrating existing initiatives before initiating new activities. Once again, capacity building efforts need to be an emphasized part of the discussion.

## **OECD** (Martine Durand)

Like others who have already sent comments, we find that the summary is very good.

Concerning the proposed themes in the concept note for the 17 December seminar, we believe that, while relevant, they remain a bit too general, probably reflecting the fact that we have insufficient information at this stage on what the goals and targets will actually be. But it would seem important to focus the discussions on concrete issues, as opposed to too general principles and declarations. Otherwise, it is not obvious what value added the seminar would bring.

Finally, we strongly support Eurostat's comments on the role of PARIS21 -- not least because they are the Secretariat to the Busan Action Plan for Statistics -- and on the need to build on existing work and partnerships.

## **Paris 21** (Johannes Jutting)

Thank you for sending these documents; really appreciated all this work

## **Eurostat** (Pieter Everaers)

Eurostat has a number of comments and suggested amendments on the concept note for the 17th December which we attach with track changes to this note. We would be grateful if these could be taken on board. We further have a number of suggestions on how we could contribute to this meeting. These are given in the attached letter.

### ***Comments on the concept note***

### **Open Working Group “Informal meeting on measuring progress”**

**UN Headquarters, 17. December 2013**

**Draft concept note**

*(as of 7 October)*

## Morning session

### 1. Lessons learned from MDG monitoring: the link between policy and statistics; goals, targets and indicators; aligning global monitoring needs with strengthening national systems, measuring and monitoring post-2015 development agenda goals and targets

Monitoring and measuring progress requires the adoption of an integrated statistical approach taking into account policy priorities and needs. Experiences gained in the MDG monitoring and implementation would be an important building block for the post-2015 development agenda, including a set of SDGs. This session will review how the MDG targets and indicators were selected, and discuss the strengths and shortcomings of the current framework and institutional arrangements to monitor and measure progress in realizing the MDGs. The issues will include how such a monitoring mechanism must enhance the statistical capacity of countries and forge coordination of statistical activities among different offices both at national and international level. **The work done by four of the institutions of the Partnership for Statistics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (PARIS21) in 2000 is of interest in this context<sup>1</sup>.** This session will also focus on the main principles for the post-2015 development agenda and their requirements and challenges for statistical development by reviewing proposed approaches, goals and targets.

Discussions aim to foster a better understanding of:

- Linking policy and statistics, integrating statistics in decision making, facilitating transparency and accountability through monitoring and reporting; the need for an early engagement of statisticians;
- **Alignment of global monitoring needs with strengthening national statistical systems<sup>2</sup>**
- The hierarchy, relationship and interlinkages between goals, targets and indicators
  - Criteria for target setting and indicator selection; consistency between goals, targets and indicators, parsimony (selecting the simplest plausible model with the fewest possible number of variables);
  - How do global, regional and national targets relate to one another?
  - National adaptation and disaggregations based on national priorities;
- Review of proposed approaches, goals and targets (from HLP report and other proposals) and possible indicators
  - Overarching goal is eradication of extreme poverty by 2030;
  - Social, economic and environmental dimensions – separate or integrated goals, targets and indicators;
  - Interlinkages among themes/topics;
  - Cross cutting issues such as strengthening institutions and governance;
- How does monitoring work?
  - Numerical and time-bound assessment of goals, targets and indicators;
  - The role of statistical standards;
  - How indicators can be compiled by national statistical systems through sustainable and balanced reporting procedures?
- Required data and indicators for monitoring the proposed goals and targets
  - Bringing in new methods and data sources (administrative data, possibly big data);
  - Integrating statistics and geospatial information;
  - What baseline to select? Timeliness and periodicity of reporting;
  - Disaggregation and national adaptation issues;
  - Data quality.

## Afternoon session

### 2. What it takes and how to do it – statistical capacity for measuring and monitoring

This session will discuss the ways of strengthening the partnership for statistical and data development. It will **provide an overview on new opportunities and challenges related to data**

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/bwa\\_e.pdf](http://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/bwa_e.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> PARIS21 (2013)- “Strengthening national statistical systems to monitor global goals”

supply and demand, take stock of ~~focus on~~ existing statistical capacities and the need for strengthened capacity building at the national and international levels, in terms of statistical and institutional capacities and monitoring mechanisms. It will discuss the issues of:

- Reconfirming the Busan Plan of Action **and the role of PARIS21 as its secretariat** in particular regarding strengthening and re-focusing national statistical strategies to produce the data that support country-level development priorities;
- **The role of existing partnerships encompassing national, regional, international and supranational organisations: their experience in coordinating statistical capacity building and their work as both users and producers of statistics.**
- Importance of country ownership and national policy priorities: capacity building aligned with countries' national strategies, institutions and procedures - mainstreaming the SDGs/post-2015 development goals into the national statistical system;
- Setting up a **formal** global partnership[MO1] in development **of data and** statistics at global, national and regional level ~~with coordinating role of the Statistical Commission and contribution of the international community of official statisticians~~ that is
  - **Assessing supply and demand for data in the post 2015 development framework**
  - ~~Evaluation~~ **Taking stock** of existing national statistical capacity with coordinating role of national statistical offices; quick assessment methods for national statistical and institutional capacity across statistical domains; strategic planning and result based management for national statistical systems;
  - **Assessing the potential of existing partnerships in view of possibilities to develop them into the broader partnership on data development**
  - Possibilities, costing and financing for establishing the required statistical capacities, ensuring financing for robust statistical information;
  - Mobilisation of domestic and external resources for capacity building;
  - National, regional and international mechanism for monitoring.

### 3. Roadmap for measurement - setting up a global partnership for development data

The closing session will wrap up the discussions and conclusions of Sessions 1-2. The expected output would be to determine:

- Considerations regarding the establishment of a SDG/post-2015 monitoring system with appropriate targets and a common set of indicators;
- The setting up of a global partnership for development data;
- The role **and modus operandi of working together** of the Statistical Commission, national statistical offices, working groups, **existing partnerships** and international and regional organizations;
- Conclusions on monitoring and measuring progress.

***MO1:** We find this confusing. There is already a global partnership of users and producers of statistics, PARIS21. This organisation was set up at the end of the 90s by the big five: UN, EC, WB, IMF, OECD exactly to provide a global partnership and leadership in statistics. We would have assumed that, given their network and membership at global, regional and national level as well as their knowledge and experience, that they could be the prime drivers and form the core of any global partnership. We do not see any other natural leader which encompasses such a large segment of the statistical community*



18 -10- 2013

Luxembourg,  
ESTAT-A0/PE/A1/CPS/MO/bm D(2013)  
3515452

Mr Philippe Cuneo  
INSEE  
Sustainable development  
Coordinator  
18, bd Adolphe Pinard  
75675 Paris Cedex 14  
FRANCE

**Subject:** Open Working Group (OWG) informal meeting, 17 December 2013 -  
Summary of contributions to the High Level Panel (HLP) of experts

**Ref.:** Your mail of 8 October 2013 to the Statistical Commission Friends of  
the Chair (FROCH) group on 'Broader Measures of Progress'

Dear Mr Cuneo,

Thank you for your mail of 8 October 2013 asking me and Marleen De Smedt for comments on the draft concept note for the December 2013 Open Working Group (OWG) informal meeting on measuring progress and on the summary of contributions received on the report of the High Level Panel (HLP) of experts.

We welcome that a **concept note** for the December 2013 OWG informal meeting is prepared, but would like to use this occasion to propose that you revise this draft note appropriately. I remind you of the importance of the Partnership for Statistics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (PARIS21) global partnership which was founded in 1999 by the UN, World Bank, IMF, OECD and European Commission. It encompasses users and producers of statistics around the globe. Its secretariat also has the mandate as the secretariat of the Busan Action Plan for Statistics (BAPS). My services have suggested several amendments to the text which you will find in the document attached.

We would further be grateful if a member of the PARIS21 partnership or, preferably, a member of its secretariat, were to be given an active role. Given the urgency to show leadership and coordination in this dynamic time for statistics we urge you to use existing partnership structures as far possible so as to advance the work to meet our joint goals. We fear that if this Partnership is not given an appropriate role, the success of the post-2015 discussions and outcomes may be jeopardised.



We agree with the **summary of contributions on the HLP report**. Without doubt, the HLP report provides some important initial proposals on goals and targets and an opportunity for the statistical community to be engaged early on in the process, assessing the feasibility of developing indicators and existing data gaps. But we would however suggest to take a rather cautious line on the whole of the report, waiting to receive other forthcoming proposals for goals and targets.

As for the organisation of the **OWG informal meeting on measuring progress**, to be held on 17 December 2013, we recognise that this is a very important and timely step towards ensuring the participation of the statistical community in the work on the post-2015 development agenda/Sustainable Development Goals.

Eurostat could contribute as follows:

- morning session – monitoring: the link between policy and statistics:

The event will help stimulate discussion about statistical methods to measure progress towards sustainable development.

Eurostat has an established experience in monitoring and reporting on sustainable development indicators. As early as in 1993, Eurostat supported the efforts of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in developing a global set of indicators. In 2006, Eurostat was given the official mandate to monitor the EU's progress towards the objectives and targets of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS). Most importantly, Eurostat is responsible for the production, every second year, of the **Monitoring Report of the SDS**. Four reports have been published up till now: [2005](#), [2007](#), [2009](#) and [2011](#), with the 2013 Monitoring Report due by mid-November this year.

In addition, Eurostat is in charge of monitoring the progress – through headline indicators - towards the targets set for the Europe2020 strategy<sup>1</sup>. A **Eurostat Flagship publication on the Europe2020 strategy and its monitoring process** is expected for end of October 2013.

In December 2013, we will also publish the handbook **Getting messages across using indicators**, based on experiences from assessing sustainable development indicators. It summarises practices in the European Statistical System (ESS) and is the result of the Switzerland-led Expert Group on Indicator-based Assessment.

So Eurostat would like to actively contribute in the OWG informal meeting by making a presentation on methodological work in the ESS, as well as on its experience of independent evaluation of policy indicator trends and its contribution to the policy-making cycle in Europe.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/europe\\_2020\\_indicators/headline\\_indicators](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/europe_2020_indicators/headline_indicators)

- morning session - new methods and data sources:

We are also involved in the work of the UNECE Sandbox Task Team on Big Data and we could provide further input on this point. We will also establish from January 2014 onwards a special internal Eurostat Task Force that will be dealing with Big Data across Eurostat.

Eurostat is committed to remain actively involved in the activities of the FROCH. Note that we also take part in the European Commission's inter-service group on the post-2015 development framework, where we provide expert advice on indicators.

A copy of this letter is being sent to Mrs Claire Plateau, INSEE. For any further information please contact directly Marleen De Smedt, Adviser to the Director-General ([marleen.desmedt@ec.eurostat.eu](mailto:marleen.desmedt@ec.eurostat.eu)).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pieter Everaers', with a stylized flourish above the 'n' in 'Everaers'.

Pieter Everaers

Annika NÄSLUND  
Head of Unit ESTATA.2  
Human Resources Management

**UNECE** (Lydia Bratanova)

In my view the description of the event is perhaps all right but a bit ambitious for 1 day meeting. Needs to be more focused. It is important to how it will be organised: (a) who will speak; (b) what about; (c) expected outcome; (d) who will attend. The way it is drafted now it sounds like a yet another meeting/conference on the topic. The expected outcome should be defined;

For your information, on 7-8 November in Istanbul, the UNECE together with UNDP is organising a Regional consultation at the political level on the Post -2015 Agenda . One of the session is dedicated to:"The power of Measurement: Monitoring Progress in SD". The UNECE Statistical division is involved in the organisation of the session with 4 speakers: a representative of the academia, Blagica Novkoska (head of SO of the FY Republic of Macedonia, the WB and myself. I was asked to talk about "Lessons learned from MDGs and perspectives for measurement beyond 2015". I plan to bring to the attention of this Regional Consultation the work of the FOC and will definitely refer to the summary you have prepared. The outcome of this Regional Consultation will be submitted to NY as an input to the global discussion.