

Background Document/Discussion Paper
Architecture of the indicator framework

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Architecture of the indicator framework

1. The Friends of the Chair group on broader measures of progress, in their recommendations on the preparation of the indicator framework, suggested the following principles:
 - a) Existing and agreed indicators sets and proposals for new sets of indicators (be it from existing monitoring initiatives, international agreements, conceptual frameworks, thematic consultations or other efforts) as well as their conceptual bases should be taken into account in the design of the indicator framework as appropriate.
 - b) The five conceptual issues identified in the Compendium of Statistical Notes under Conceptual Issues, should be considered, namely: (i) universality, (ii) inclusiveness, (iii) scope of the development agenda, (iv) inter-linkages and cross-cutting issues, and (v) means vs. ends and focus on meaningful outcomes.
 - c) The conceptual basis for the indicator framework should be discussed and elaborated as appropriate. The CES Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development, having been reviewed and agreed upon by an inter-governmental process, are a useful starting point for the statistical community. The Rio+20 outcome document “The future we want” and the OWG Outcome Document represent the conceptual basis from a political/policy perspective, which the indicator framework will need to reflect and respond to. It is suggested that as a first step the OWG targets should be mapped against each other and analyzed with respect to the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) and the CES recommendations in order to identify inter-linkages, overlaps and gaps.
2. Furthermore, the design of the indicator framework should take into account the very significant mismatch between the capabilities of national statistical systems in particular in developing countries, and the ambition to report on a much broader set of indicators, at a much greater level of disaggregation, compared with the MDGs. Therefore, the global indicator framework is expected to contain a limited number of universal and global indicators but may also allow for elements of flexibility such as additional tiers of indicators, depending on the overall requirements.
3. The term ‘indicator framework’ refers to the idea that there should be a coherent set of indicators that addresses the overall requirements of the post-2015 development agenda. The work on the indicator framework entails the selection of appropriate indicators. The term ‘architecture’ refers to the idea that the global indicator framework is part of a larger

indicator architecture consisting of indicator frameworks at different levels of monitoring and thematic indicator frameworks.

Considerations for a multi-dimensional and multi-tier indicator framework architecture

4. The indicator framework architecture is expected to have at its core a limited number of global and universal indicators that will be proposed as a common basis to compare across countries and regions. The main objectives of this core set of global indicators will be to inform policy making at the international level and provide the basis for communication and advocacy in order to bring global attention to the priority areas of sustainable development. Furthermore, the focus on a core set of global indicators is expected to facilitate their monitoring.

5. The core set of global indicators will also be used as the basis to develop complementary lists of regional, national, and sub-national indicators. Most of the global indicators should be applicable for most countries also at national level. However, whenever an indicator is not applicable for a country at national level to measure a specific target, one or more complementary indicators will be needed. Furthermore, complementary indicators can be chosen to monitor an aspect of the target not covered by the global indicator(s) but of particular relevance at a national, sub-national and regional level (see also thematic monitoring).

6. The level of monitoring is one dimension of monitoring. The thematic focus is a second dimension. Complementary indicators for each specific thematic area should be established at all levels of monitoring. There can be complementary indicators for instance on health at the national, sub-national, regional and global levels to cover certain elements of a specific target that the core set of global indicators may not cover.

7. For an indicator not to be included in the core set of global indicators does not necessarily mean the indicator is less important. Individual indicators are not always equally relevant for all levels of monitoring and decision-making. Therefore, the fitness for purpose is an important criteria for the selection of a specific indicator.

8. The core set of global indicators (the indicator framework at global level) will need to consider the issues of (i) universality, (ii) inclusiveness, (iii) scope of the development agenda, (iv) inter-linkages and cross-cutting issues, and (v) means vs. ends and focus on meaningful outcomes. Universality is an important criterion for the selection of global indicators. Inclusiveness requires an appropriate level of disaggregation across the core set of global indicators. The core set of global indicators should cover all aspects of sustainable development in a balanced way, not overemphasizing one aspect over the other. Furthermore, the core set of global indicators should be coherent, recognizing inter-linkages and cross-cutting issues while avoiding redundancies. It is expected that the core set of global indicators will focus more on ends/outcomes while national monitoring will focus, in addition, on means, hereby informing national policy making and planning.