



Statement by the UNDG Human Rights Working Group at the Expert Group Meeting on the Indicator Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, on 25-26 February 2015

The UNDG Human Rights Working Group welcomes recent efforts to generate a proposal of transformative and technically robust post-2015 indicators. This proposal will deepen the application of the ambitious vision put forward by Member States in the outcome document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and the UN Secretary-General in his synthesis report on the post-2015 agenda.

As these two documents underscore, we are at the eve of a historic opportunity to give global and yet more practical meaning to our United Nations' promise in the UN Charter "to reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of the human person". This opportunity to take the world forward to a sustainable future must result in the development of a universal, integrated and human rights-based agenda for sustainable development that leaves no one behind. Consultations with people of the world (A million voices report) have affirmed a clear demand and expectation that the agenda will be founded on a universal human rights-based approach, focused on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, which in turn requires a new sophistication in data collection in order to advance from a focus on national aggregates alone towards disaggregated data, to help ensure that no one is left behind.

In developing indicators that can help bring to life this ambitious agenda, we are confronted with two important challenges: first, defining indicators that are technically robust but transformative; and second, creating indicators that are measurable but innovative enough to capture the priorities of a people-centered development agenda; a new and transformative agenda that cannot be measured with existing indicators alone.

An agenda that is to reach everyone requires that we measure *who* is being left behind. The twin principles of equality and non-discrimination are thus the cornerstone of a transformative people-centered agenda. While Goals 5 and 10 address inequalities and discrimination and Goal 16 devotes further attention to anti-discrimination measures, data disaggregation will be a fundamental tool to reveal inequalities and deprivation across all goals and targets of the 2015 SDG framework.

The Human Rights Working Group recommends the adoption of a consistent approach to data disaggregation throughout the entire SDG framework. From a human rights perspective, disaggregation should be grounded, to the fullest extent feasible, on the list of "prohibited grounds of discrimination", including, inter alia, by sex, age, race, ethnicity, income, location, disability, migrant and displacement status (refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs)), stateless persons, remote and mobile populations and other grounds (caste, minorities, indigenous peoples, LGBTI peoples, HIV status, sex workers, marital status, slum-dwellers, homeless persons, etc.). This will ensure that disaggregation is based on existing agreed normative standards under international law.

Less precise and non-normative formulations such as "social groups" or "specific groups according to country characteristics" may impede measurement of equality and non-discrimination. Such denominations, which could be interpreted and applied in ways that fall below the international human rights obligation of non-discrimination, may fail to challenge systems of data collection and analysis that obscure the lived realities of people diverse by identity and status, and risks their further embedding.

These obligations of equality and non-discrimination are enshrined in the UN Charter and all core international human rights treaties and all Member States have ratified at least one of those treaties. It is Member States obligations therefore that underpin this call to data disaggregation by prohibited grounds of discrimination.

Disaggregation by sex will be critical for ensuring gender equality. The UN Secretary-General's synthesis report points out that this is the century of women: we will not realize our full potential if half of humanity continues to be held back. All parts of government must be responsible for achieving gender equality and the realization of women's and girls'



human rights. The SDGs framework must contribute to a strengthened institutionalization of gender mainstreaming across the different sectors of the government. This requires effective means of monitoring progress, which in turn requires increased investment in statistical capacities including gender statistics.

Disaggregation by age is another important cross-cutting factor. For example, young people will be the torch bearers of the next sustainable development agenda through 2030. Yet, adolescent girls, and in particular the very young adolescents aged 10-14 continue to be almost totally invisible in statistics, despite being, at this critical point in their transition from childhood to adulthood, at a higher risk of vulnerability, disempowerment, violence and abuse. While this glaring omission in national Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) has been justified on ethical grounds, the life threatening consequences of misunderstanding adolescents' health – an outcome of a lack of data - also presents significant ethical problems. This case is a compelling illustration of the need to push ourselves to find practical solutions and innovative approaches as part of the call for a “data revolution” that leaves no one behind.

The “data revolution” means that a forward-looking approach to measurement will be critical, so that the priorities of the Post-2015 development agenda are not restricted by the currently available data. Only by investing in new data and data sources, it will be possible to measure the reduction of inequalities and social exclusion as central pillars for a successful implementation of the SDGs.

Accountability, participation and the rule of law are fundamental human rights principles to consider in future planning, implementation and monitoring efforts as well as in the context of the “data revolution”. Many during the post-2015 process have called for a rigorous, inclusive and participatory monitoring and review framework to help hold governments, businesses, and international organizations accountable for results that should be consistent with human rights standards and principles. Continued participation of the world's population in the post-2015 development agenda will require strong national, regional and global mechanisms that ensure the informed participation of all segments of civil society, particularly those who have been most excluded, not only in the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs, but also in the design and implementation of the specific policies set in place to achieve the SDGs.

Public participation in development and effective accountability for all will remain elusive without an active civil society of empowered women and men – young and old – who can exercise their right to information, freedom of expression and association while enjoying their economic, social and cultural rights; and who can rely on the enabling environment of media pluralism as well as on the work of independent journalists and human rights defenders, whose safety is guaranteed under all circumstances. From a human rights perspective, a set of indicators measuring the extent to which an enabling legal and policy environment is present to promote and protect the exercise of these rights and freedoms should be preserved as an indivisible component of the post-2015 framework. It is crucial to gather information on access to remedies as well as on the effectiveness of protection systems in addressing human rights shortcomings, including discrimination on all prohibited grounds. Access to justice is not an “optional extra” but a core component of development when coupled with transparent, accountable, and responsive governance institutions.

While all goals are intended to be universally applicable to all States, targets will require some level of adaptation to the country context, which will likely result in a two-tiered level of global and national indicators. This expert group as well as the technical work that will follow after the annual meeting of the Commission on Statistics in March 2015 should develop clear guidance and criteria that will assist Member States to adapt targets and national indicators through inclusive, participatory and transparent processes that ensure a close alignment of national targets and indicators with existing international human rights standards, commitments, and binding obligations on Member States.

The UNDG Human Rights Working Group stands ready to provide advice and guidance along this journey, mindful that the task calls for technical rigour, but convinced that the ultimate purpose is a people-centered development agenda and a world where no one is left behind.