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**Items for discussion and decision: Data and indicators
for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Background document

Available in English only

Update on the work to finalize the proposals for the global indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals

Prepared by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators

(February 2016)

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Summary

This document presents an update of the work carried out by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to finalize the proposals for the global indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular it describes the consultative process undertaken to finalize the indicators since early December, when the report by the IAEG-SDGs on Sustainable Development Indicators (E/CN.3/2016/2) was submitted to this Commission.

The result is a proposed framework for global SDG indicators for consideration and endorsement by the UN Statistical Commission. The document also describes the key issues raised during the consultation among members and from a wide array of stakeholders, including countries that are not members of the IAEG-SDGs, regional and international organisations, civil society, academia, and the private sector. Finally, the document highlights issues where further work remains.

I. Introduction

1. Following the mandate given by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) has worked intensively over the past year to develop a global indicator framework for the follow-up and review of progress made in implementing the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. Based on the work plan agreed at its second meeting, held in Bangkok, from 28 to 30 October 2015, the IAEG-SDGs reached general agreement on a set of 149 proposed indicators and prepared a report in December 2015 for the 47th session of the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2016/2). The IAEG-SDGs also agreed to undertake further work and consultation on the 80 indicators marked with an asterisk in the report to the Statistical Commission, which was carried out from 1 December 2015 to 15 February 2016.

2. This background document describes the work carried out by the IAEG-SDGs in finalizing the proposals for the remaining indicators and highlights the areas where further work remains.

II. Activities undertaken on finalizing the indicator proposals

3. During this further phase of consultation, the work of the IAEG-SDGs has continued to be guided by the principle that the indicators should be selected in a way that preserves the political balance and ambition of the agenda. All indicator proposals have been reviewed in-depth to ensure they encompass the target to the greatest extent possible, including addressing specific groups of the population. The indicators have also been reviewed taking in full consideration the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, which were adopted by the General Assembly in 2014.

4. In order to continue to ensure an inclusive, open and transparent process, an open consultation was held on the proposed SDG indicators coded ‘grey’, indicating that additional work and discussion were needed before reaching a final agreement. The consultation was held from 9 to 15 December 2015 with a wide array of stakeholders, including countries that are not members of the IAEG-SDGs, regional and international organizations, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

5. Inputs and additional proposals were received from over 400 observers and other stakeholders. All suggestions and comments were reviewed and considered by the IAEG-SDG members in the final phase of preparation of the set of indicators for submission to the Statistical Commission. In addition, the IAEG-SDGs further consulted experts, including from the relevant international agencies, on particular areas where further clarification and additional supporting documents were needed.

6. Between 23 December 2015 and 15 Feb 2016, the IAEG-SDGs carried out four more rounds of consultations among members on further refinements and additional proposals on some of the indicators and held one audio conference to discuss the way forward. During this intensive consultative process, the IAEG-SDG members consulted with the many parts of their national statistical systems, carefully reviewed all the proposals and inputs provided by experts from a large number of countries, regional and international organizations, and other important stakeholders, and reached general agreement on those indicators that were marked with an asterisk in the report to the Statistical Commission.

7. At the end of the process, the group reached final agreement on the following:

- A list of **230** indicators¹ on which general agreement has been reached, including several ones where more methodological work is still needed, and that are included in Annex IV of the Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, Revision 1 (E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev1).
- Five indicators under 4 targets (targets 1.5, 11.5, 11.b and 13.1) were identified as related to the “Sendai Framework for Disaster risk Reduction 2015-2030”. An open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction established by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/69/284) is developing a set of indicators to measure global progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework. The IAEG-SDGs agreed to allow this process to conclude (at the end of 2016) and to maintain placeholders for those indicators that will eventually

¹ The total number of indicators listed in the final indicator proposal is 241. However, since nine indicators repeat under two or three different targets the actual total number of individual indicators in the list is 230.

reflect the agreements on the Sendai Framework Indicators. Those indicators are identified by a footnote in Annex IV of the Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, Revision 1 (E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev1).

8. The full list of the proposed global SDG indicators is presented in Annex IV of the report of the Inter-agency and expert Group on Sustainable Development Indicators (E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1) to the Statistical Commission. The list includes indicators for which standards already exist as well as indicators that will require methodological development (see also section IV of this report and section B of the Report of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, E/CN.3/2016/2/). At its 47th session, the Statistical Commission is invited to review and adopt the proposed global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as reflected in the list of indicators in Annex IV, which will subsequently be presented for adoption by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. As noted in E/CN.3/2016/2 (paragraphs 19, 22, 25 and 31), although the IAEG-SDGs has made every attempt to provide a complete and comprehensive proposal for the indicator framework within the time constraints provided, it is recognized that additional work is necessary to fully address remaining measurement issues.

III. Issues raised in the development of the global indicator framework

9. The IAEG-SDGs has worked very intensively for the development of the global indicator framework within the time frame established by the political process, with the aim of ensuring that the proposed global indicators are technically sound, robust, address all Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including for means of implementation, and preserve the political balance, integration and ambition contained therein.

10. The proposed indicators are the result of a thorough technical discussion and were identified as the best option that the statistical community could recommend given the obvious theoretical and methodological constraints. The IAEG-SDGs recognizes that refinements and improvements to several indicators will be needed over the years, as knowledge improves and new tools and data sources become available.

11. The global indicators will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels to be developed by Member States, in line with the principle defined in the 2030 Agenda. The national indicator framework for the follow-up and review process will be “voluntary and country-led, will take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and will respect policy space and priorities. As national ownership is key to achieving sustainable development, the outcome from national-level processes will be the foundation for reviews at the regional and global levels, given that the global review will be primarily based on national official data sources.”²

12. The IAEG-SDGs stressed that the indicators proposed are intended for global reviews and are not necessarily applicable to all national contexts and country reviews. National ownership of member states' own national process is absolutely critical. As noted in the 2030 Agenda, targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition, but taking into account national circumstances.

IV. Conclusion and way forward

13. Once the global indicator framework is agreed upon by the Statistical Commission, the IAEG-SDGs will concentrate on the implementation phase. The first important step will be the assessment of the status of all indicators proposed. The indicators will be classified into three tiers:

- a first tier for which an established methodology exists and data are already widely available;
- a second tier for which a methodology has been established but for which data are not regularly available; and
- a third tier for which an internationally agreed methodology has not yet been developed.

² see A/RES/70/1 - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (The 2030 Agenda) (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.1&Lang=E), para. 74

14. Indicators under tier II and especially under tier III are those where refinements and improvements will be needed over the coming years as better tools and more data become available. The establishment of a tier system for the list of indicators will be discussed at the third meeting of the IAEG-SDGs, to take place from 30 March to 1 April 2016, in Mexico City. A complete set of metadata will also be developed to accompany all indicators.

15. The third meeting of the IAEG-SDGs will also discuss the establishment of procedures for the methodological review of indicators, including approval mechanisms of needed revisions or replacements, and the development of global reporting mechanisms. The latter will include a discussion of processes used for MDG reporting, lessons learnt, and anticipated general requirements. These discussions will be guided by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, particularly with regard to transparency and public access to official statistics.