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Discussion on Agenda 3(a) - Data and indicators for the 2030 Sustainable
Development Agenda
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**Madam. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,**

It is a distinct honour for me to participate in the 47th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

Let me join my colleagues in congratulating you and other office bearers of the Bureau on your election.

I am happy to share India's views on agenda item 3 (a). We attach high importance to the issue of development of indicators for monitoring of SDGs.

To start with, I wish to thank the Co-Chairs, members and Observers of Inter-Agency and Expert Group for Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDG) for the effort and time that they have put in bringing an initial and preliminary proposal of indicators for consideration of the Commission.

I would also like to thank the United Nations Statistical Division for its excellent support to this process.

Madam Chair,

From the very beginning of the process, the IAEG had identified and worked on a set of core principles for the indicators.

These include being methodologically sound, measurable, accessible, relevant, timely, internationally comparable, and limited in number.

While it is indeed commendable that in a relatively short period of time, the IAEG has been able to identify a set of 231 indicators, it is also clear that not all of them meet these criteria.

This understanding has been underscored by the IAEG itself and the proposal to now group the identified indicators into 3 distinct Tiers is an implicit recognition that further technical work is required to reach a consensus set of global indicators.

From India's perspective, we have consistently raised our concerns with several of the indicators throughout the IAEG process.

To recap some of these concerns, in some cases, the indicators seem to go beyond the remit of target they seem to be measuring and appear to editorialize about the content of target themselves.

In some other cases, the indicators do not seem to be directly relevant to the targets they are measuring. Targets 3(c), 8(b), 9.4 are some examples.

Moreover, we are concerned that the focus of most of the indicators seems to be exclusively on national action, even in respect of those targets that are clearly meant for international cooperation.

For example, for target *'1.a: Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions'*, the suggested indicator focuses only on national resource availability.

This is true of several such targets.

Needless to say, this detracts from the spirit of the SDGs and in particular the Means of Implementation targets which seek to enhance international support for developing country actions.

In addition, there are several other indicators which seem to rely primarily on perception surveys or opinion polls as the primary data set. For example, the indicator *'10.3.1: Percentage of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the last 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law'* or indicator *'16.6.2: Proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public services'*.

While some such perception surveys may have been used in a few, usually developed countries, there are no internationally accepted standards or guidelines for them. Extending them to a universal agenda and to developing countries would require significant additional work and would also have to account for socio-cultural differences among countries. Without this, we should caution that such indicators could be overly subjective, imprecise and also prone to misuse.

It is also important to bear in mind that while the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs are universal, they are also differentiated. Target 12.1.1 for example clearly mandates the developed countries to take the lead in implementation when it comes to promoting sustainable patterns of consumption. The indicator for this target however completely neglects this dimension. It could be argued that this mis-focus is also political.

Madam Chair,

These are some of the concerns we have with this initial proposal of the IAEG. Other delegations before my intervention also made similar comments.

It is clear that much more technical work is needed before this is taken to any conclusion. We should avoid any undue haste in closing this process.

It is our responsibility as Statisticians to provide as complete and robust a package as possible.

We should emphasize that an imperfect product will only complicate the political consideration of the proposal in a manner that can only be harmful to the technical robustness or independence of the process we have undertaken.

In our view, it is clear that we cannot adopt the complete set of 231 proposed indicators as being at the same footing.

We would propose therefore that the decision of the Statistical Commission unambiguously note that the proposal of 231 indicators that we have before us is 'provisional' and that several of the indicators will need considerable further improvement.

Going forward, the IAEG would also need to carefully classify the initial indicators based on their appropriateness, relevance, data availability and methodological issues.

The Commission should also recommend that further technical work will be needed to clarify the indicators and build consensus on them, in our communication to ECOSOC and General Assembly.

I thank you.
