

**Statement of the United States of America to the  
UN Statistical Commission Meetings  
March 8, 2016**

**Agenda Item 3a: Data and indicators  
for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Delivered by Katherine Wallman, U.S. Representative  
to the UN Statistical Commission,  
and Chief Statistician, Executive Office of the President**

*Statement As Prepared  
(Oral Statement was abbreviated due to time constraints)*

**Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development  
Goal Indicators**

The United States thanks the IAEG for its work to date and acknowledges the current proposal for 231 indicators is the result of a transparent, inclusive, and technical process carried out within a limited timeframe. Some of these indicators reflect areas that have been measured routinely for decades within the international statistical system. However, some of these indicators reflect areas new (or “newer”) to statistical measurement and thus would benefit from further methodological development. The IAEG has been very clear about these differences among indicators, and has proposed a plan to undertake the work critical to robust measurement.

It should not be surprising to any of us, given the scope and ambition of the 2030 Agenda, that some of these indicators will need further work to allow the robust measurement the SDGs fully deserve. In some cases, additional indicators seem warranted to address fully the scope of particular targets, such as those under 16.1.

Further consultation alone will not address these needs; empirical testing will be necessary as well. We also recognize that information systems and statistical needs will continue to evolve over the course of the 2030 mandate, and any work plan should allow for such flexibility.

Acknowledging and addressing these statistical needs reflects good science. Fortunately, the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) has a long history of supporting methodological work to meet new statistical demands. The IAEG proposes, quite rightly, we think, to leverage its work within that existing process, as reflected in its work plan.

Therefore, we recommend the UNSC endorse this initial set of indicators as the outcome of a robust, technical process. We recommend that this initial set be the basis for preliminary action by national statistical offices and the United Nations. As noted by the IAEG, the indicators proposed are intended for global reviews. National ownership of member states' own national process is absolutely critical. The 2030 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. Mobilizing efforts at the national level as soon as possible is not only important for establishing a baseline and gathering initial data. It will also provide important feedback to the IAEG on additional methodological work necessary to facilitate adequate statistical reporting for the indicator framework.

In that regard, we urge the IAEG to continue its work, in line with prior instructions that 1) all targets should be addressed equally, 2) each target should have at least one indicator, 3) indicators should not “reinterpret” their associated

target, and 4) the framework should seek to minimize the overall number of indicators required for adequate monitoring of the targets. Further, this new work must be carried out in the same technical, transparent, and inclusive manner in which the IAEG began its work and with the same level of focus, determination, and ambition that reflects the spirit of the 2030 Agenda and which so well conforms to the responsibilities laid out in the resolution of the General Assembly on *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*.

Additionally, we recommend that the IAEG identify ways to ensure the indicator framework effectively covers the full scope of each target. We further recommend that the IAEG include in its report to the UNSC an evaluation of the functioning of this initial indicator set, an assessment of methodological development needed, and proposals for any revisions to its technical process.

### **Report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Post-2015 Monitoring**

The Commission has emphasized the importance of capacity building to enable all national statistical offices to adequately collect and analyze data based on the proposed indicator framework, and encouraged the High Level Group to recommend concrete and urgent actions required address capacity needs.

To that end, we acknowledge the work of the High Level Group to date, and are especially pleased to note plans to coordinate closely with the IAEG. As our colleagues at UNSD have so aptly described, whereas the IAEG is tasked in assisting with statistical reporting on SDG indicators (that is, “filling in the grid with what we have”), the HLG is tasked with assisting with resolving data and

statistical gaps (that is, “filling the gaps”). Close coordination of these groups is therefore essential. This coordination will be especially important to effectively manage and address the reporting burden of national statistical offices over the coming years.

To accomplish this task, the HLG’s Terms of Reference call upon it to engage broadly with partnerships in the public sector, the private sector, and civil society. Indeed, the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda necessitate working closely with multiple partnerships and stakeholders to ensure full and successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, we welcome the efforts of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, as we have those of Paris 21. We encourage these and other partnerships that seek innovative ways to build capacity and improve public access to and utility of data and statistics in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is important to note that the Terms of Reference also call for the HLG to coordinate among these partnerships to best leverage expertise and efficiencies. As we have said often of the 2030 Agenda, there is more than enough work to go around. To keep partners working in concert and contributing in accordance with their respective comparative advantages, open communication and sound coordination are essential.

To that end, we recommend that the Terms of Reference for the HLG (point 2) be amended to more clearly indicate its role as the UN focal point for coordinating with partnerships and with the Statistical Commission (as well as with other agencies of the UN system) in addressing data and statistical gaps pertaining to the SDGs.