



INDIA भारत

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New York**

**Discussion on Agenda 3(a) -
Data and indicators for the 2030
Agenda for Sustainable Development**

**Statement delivered by Dr. T.C.A. Anant,
Chief Statistician of India and Secretary,
Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation,
Government of India**

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**Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,**

It is an honour for me to participate in the 48th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission and to share India's views on agenda item 3 (a).

India attaches very high importance to the issue of development of indicators for monitoring of SDGs.

First of all 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 a modified proposal of indicators for the consideration of the Commission.

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

Madam Chair,

I draw your kind attention to the decisions 1(d), 1(e) and 1(f) of 47th Session of the Statistical Commission.

The decision 1 (e) makes it binding on IAEG-SDG to take into account of all the concerns mentioned by the countries in their oral statements. We are happy to note that IAEG-SDG has drawn a work-plan for addressing the concerns raised by the countries which has been brought before us for discussion.

Madam Chair,

In our opinion the IAEG-SDG's proposed work-plan needs improvements and modification for ensuring that the concerns shown by the countries on the indicator framework in the 47th session are fully and appropriately addressed.

In the 47th Session Commission endorsed the IAEG-SDG proposal for grouping of indicators into Tier I, II and III since the indicator set was not complete and further technical refinements and improvements were required to ensure that the global indicators possesses requisite statistical properties and the SDG progress report based on the accepted global list of indicators reflects true picture of progress. We appreciate the IAEG-SDG effort in minimising the number of indicators in Tier III. However no simultaneous effort have been made to re-examine and re-classifying the indicators of Tier-I and Tier-II.

Further, there are some indicators which try to editorialize the target they are measuring or indicate different action then intended by the target being measured. For example there is a reference to 'South-South Cooperation' in indicator 17.9.1. Inclusion of such phrase distracts from the overall objective and unanimously agreed SDGs framework. This may also dilute the commitment of the developed world. In our opinion any reference to 'South-South Cooperation' should be deleted from the indicator set.

There are still indicators in the list which ask for national action but the target they intend to measure are clearly meant for global action e.g. indicator 7.b.1. Such indicators need replacement without wait. Therefore the comprehensive first phase of process for review of indicators need to be advanced. This examination should be immediately taken from 2017 itself and outcome should be submitted for consideration in next Session of the Commission in 2018 instead of 51th Session as proposed. The proposed work plan of the IAEG-SDG may therefore be suitably revised to accommodate these requirements.

I am tabling a list of indicators which in our view need revision / refinement / replacement for the appropriate consideration of IAEG-SDG during 2017 revision process.

An examination of the global indicator set proposed in the IAEG-SDG Report and the detailed concerns raised by different countries, makes it clear that many indicators are at an early stage of development. There are also serious concerns about some indicators with respect to their fitment for purpose. As statistician it is our duty to the world community to assume that the measurement of progress of Goals and targets under SDGs is being undertaken as per the statistically robust methodology. We shall be falling from our duty if we allow the adoption of an indicator framework which cannot withstand such statistical scrutiny now or in future. Our reputation as statistician is at stake if we unambiguously endorse indicators which are not robust. Therefore, the phrase “adopt the indicator list” will convey a degree of finality of the process which is not yet complete. We would like to suggest that language may be used which emphasis the fact that this is still in progress and will need further improvement.

Madam Chair,

I may draw your attention to the fact that some International Agencies have given misleading information on some indicators and the availability of internationally established standard methodology. For example, the meta-data on the UN website for indicator 2.1.2 relating to Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) claims that there is standard international established methodology for compiling this indicator. However, the meta-data mentioned a weblink to a Technical Report 2016 of FAO which clearly mentions that the methodology developed by a Technical Advisory Group was tested in 146 counties through pilot survey. There is no mention in the Technical Report that the methodology and outcomes of the pilot

survey were ever discussed in any broad forum involving national official statisticians. Further, as mentioned in the Acknowledgements of the Technical Report of 2016 the methodology and outcomes of the survey are neither officially owned by FAO nor by the Statistics Division. Government of India is not aware of any FIES survey in India. FAO informed us that it was a small sample survey for which no permission from Government of India was taken and necessary Indian guidelines for undertaking sample survey were not followed. This raises doubts on the credibility of the information being made available in the meta-data with regard to internationally established and agreed methodology and availability of data for 146 countries. India has been raising these issues during the entire consultation process of IAEG-SDG. The UN Agencies while proposing such indicators for SDG monitoring are expected to be very careful of these issues.

Further, we want to draw your attention that IAEG-SDG decisions are taken by “majority” voting principle. The IAEG-SDG consultation process is a technical exercise and therefore, we would suggest that IAEG-SDG should also follow the principle of “consensus” as being followed for the Commission decisions.

Madam Chair,

I also want to draw your attention on para 74 of 2030 Agenda document. According to which the official statistics produced by the statistical system of national government will form the basis of monitoring SDGs at all levels. The global data base therefore needs to be completely transparent on their sources. We are for instance not aware of any data produced by official statistical system of India on “material footprint” used in compiling indicator 12.2.1. How this data set in respect of India has been included in the global data base is beyond our understanding. There may be other such examples.

I would therefore strongly recommend for a greater interaction and strong coordination between the national statistical system and the International Agencies for ensuring that only data from and endorsed by the national statistical system get included in the global data set.

Madam Chair,

Lastly, I want to draw your attention on discussion point under para 33(d) Section VI of the IAEG-SDG report which seeks revision in the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the IAEG-SDG. We support the proposed revision in para 2 of TOR. However, the number of member countries to be rotated is a matter of discussion and a final view has to be taken by the Commission. We would like to suggest that :

“The Regional Commissions’ while taking a decision on the new membership of the countries on the IAEG-SDG should also ensure that the institutional memory is maintained in the Group and experiences of member countries gained during last two years are fully utilized. Therefore the replacement of countries in the rotation process may be somewhere around 25% of total number of member countries in the Group”.

I thank you.