

UN Environment Statement on the same topic (draft)

UN Environment is committed to developing data flows which adhere to the recommendations set out in the Guidelines on Data Flows. In particular, data flows which will result in the 'most efficient, accurate and transparent mechanisms for reporting data from the national to the international level' (para 2).

UN Environment welcomes the commitment of National Statistical Systems, with National Statistical Offices as the coordinator, to ensure that every country can monitor the full scope of statistics in the SDG global monitoring framework.

UN Environment recalls that in order to reduce the burden of reporting and of data validation, for both countries and for the custodian agencies, indicators with an existing process in place were prioritised for inclusion in the SDG indicator framework. For example, in the case of UN Environment, the Protected Areas indicators are part of an existing data collection which is linked to the Convention on Biological Diversity with an existing Protected Planet initiative in place and an existing national focal point for reporting. UN Environment also has indicators which are linked to the reporting on the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production; the International Resource Panel; reporting on the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Convention; data reported through the Regional Seas Conventions; and data from our programme on Integrated Water Resource Management.

Additionally, in order to reduce the burden on countries and to fill gaps in data series, data from space agencies and other Big Data sources has tremendous potential for producing comparable, high-quality data for monitoring of certain aspects of the SDGs, either with current technologies or in some cases there are technologies which are being developed now. For example, ecosystem extent, ecosystem quality, migration, coastal eutrophication, etc. In these cases, it would be more logical to reach a global agreement on when these sources should be used as opposed to working to obtain an agreement from each country. I find that this type of scenario is not captured in the document and I believe this should be further considered by the IAEG-SDG or its working group on Geospatial Information.

Based on the document, it is not clear if our existing focal points would fall within the scope of the NSS or would be considered to be outside the NSS – which based on 23.b may also include 'other government offices'. Furthermore, in that same paragraph, the statement includes 'if no agreement is reached between the custodian agency and the NSO/NSS, the national data should not be included'. Again, from UN Environment, we are confused by this statement, particularly in the case where there is already a Convention or other Global Reporting initiative which has been formally adopted/committed to by UN Member States and would include this data.

We would like to mention, that from UN Environment, we strongly support the need for Technical Assistance as elaborated in bullet point 26 and the need for improved two-way communication with countries on all the SDG indicators described throughout the document. However, as UN Environment is a UN Secretariat entity and the General Assembly has not provided UN Environment with any resources for statistical capacity building, it is very difficult for us to meet this demand. We have been working to raise project funds; however, these only cover some countries, for certain activities, within a certain timeframe. If countries would like more systematic support for building

capacity, then please discuss this with your UN representatives as this has not been included in the current UN Secretariat budget.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that we are committed to working with NSOs, NSSs and other government entities to have harmonized and comparable statistics for monitoring the SDGs.