United Nations Statistical Commission
Fifty-second session
1–3 and 5 March 2021
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda
Items for discussion and decision: data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Document E/CN.3/2021/2 - Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators

Statement provided by:
Denmark on behalf of the group of Armenia, Canada, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and USA

Statement:
This statement is delivered by Denmark on behalf of Armenia, Canada, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and USA Chair, We note that much work has been done by Custodian Agencies to facilitate reporting on SDG indicators, which has enabled better global reporting on SDGs, based upon the Guidelines for data flows created by the IAEG-SDG and the CCSA. These guidelines provide good general guidance but there remain some challenges that countries face when responding to the data requests for the statistical follow-up on the SDGs. Those challenges are multifold, and please allow us to share some general examples. For reasons of clarity, we would like to divide the examples into three categories: (1) the extent and timing of data requests, (2) coordination challenges, and (3) challenges with data validation and possible consequences of it. Finally, we would like to submit a proposal for a way forward to the consideration of the Commission. AD (1) the extent and timing of data requests We understand the deadlines Custodian Agencies are operating under, especially in the light of producing the Sustainable Development Goals Report. However, a concentration of data requests in one certain period, as was the case last December, puts countries under a heavy pressure and in some cases forces countries to prioritize between production of statistics and international data requests. Furthermore, in our opinion, the variables in the requests seem to sometimes go beyond what has been adopted by the IAEG-SDG. As a result, we face difficulties as we attempt to respond to these extensive questionnaires. We note that the described situations could result in creating unnecessary data gaps for the follow-up on the 2030 Agenda and we all agree on the importance of good evidence for decision-making. AD (2) coordination challenges NSIs experience challenges related to the process of national coordination of the replies to SDG data requests. They come in various forms and often in a format that makes it difficult to coordinate nationally. Please bear in mind that responding to a data request can often involve several government agencies. This fact that many requests are sent in the BCC form and addressed not only to NSIs, but also to the other national institutions producing data and statistics complicates internal coordination and communication as well as it can undermine the role of focal points. Additionally, the

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comments provided by the NSIs to the data requests seem to have little to no impact, as it appears they are primarily taken 'ad notam', which leaves the countries with the same challenges as before.

AD (3) challenges with validation
The current mechanism is workable in situations where data validations requests (and the data sources used for this purpose) are relatively easy to identify and address from the country perspective. This is, however, often not the case as data validation requests often lack a reference to the source data used for a given data compilation, which might leave countries with an amount of 'tracing' work that may not always be accommodated. Furthermore, estimations and models used to adjust data are most often not described in sufficient detail. In the extreme, this might lead to a situation where data is neither accurate nor validated by the countries.

Proposal
Against this background, we propose that we take stock on the implementation of the Guidelines for data flows to ensure we can build upon and improve our processes. Concretely, acknowledging the progress made in the data flow process to date, we would like to build upon the successes to address this challenging situation and propose that the IAEG-SDG and the concerned International Organizations continue the dialogue, gather and share views, discuss possible solutions and best practices for enhancing data flows to facilitate enhanced collaboration between NSIs and Custodian Agencies and enable better coordination within countries. We believe that such a dialogue will help ensure no country is left behind when it comes to data situation in the current process.

Additionally, it can also be considered whether possible findings of the dialogue proposed above could provide some examples of good practice on data flows for the implementation of the new UNdata portal, as stated under item 3m.

| Submitted on: | 2/18/2021 |