



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
16 December 2021

Original: English

---

## Statistical Commission

### Fifty-third session

1–4 March 2022

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Items for discussion and decision: data and indicators for the  
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

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

### Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2021/224 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators on ongoing work for the implementation of the global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the report, the Expert Group describes the activities undertaken in 2021 pursuant to Statistical Commission decision 52/101, including: (a) methodology review of the indicator framework and tier classification updates; (b) work stream on data disaggregation; (c) indicator refinements; (d) improvement of data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals; and (e) work carried out by the three working groups on the measurement of development support, Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX), and geospatial information. The Commission will also have before it the following background documents: the report of the Working Group on Measurement of Development Support on its work and the indicator proposal for target 17.3; the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap; and practical guidelines on small area estimation for the Goals.

The Commission is invited to comment on progress made by the Expert Group and the direction of its future work. Action to be taken by the Commission is set out in paragraph 41 of the report.

---

\* E/CN.3/2022/1.



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

## I. Introduction

1. As mandated in General Assembly resolution 70/1, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators was tasked with the development and implementation of the global indicator framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The global indicator framework developed by the Expert Group was adopted by the Assembly in its resolution 71/313 on the work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda.

2. The present report describes the work carried out by the Expert Group in 2021, on the basis of the work programme agreed upon by the Commission and in accordance with Commission decision 52/101 (see E/CN.3/2021/24). In section II of the report, the Expert Group summarizes the work on the implementation of the global indicator framework. In sections III and IV, it presents the activities of the work stream on data disaggregation and the three working groups. In section V, it describes the work programme for 2022. Action to be taken by the Commission is set out in section VI.

## II. Implementation of the global indicator framework

3. In 2021, the Expert Group continued to host quarterly open meetings focusing on selected topics related to monitoring the Goals. The meetings were held in March, June and September<sup>1</sup> in a virtual format, each attended by over 240 participants from member countries, observer countries, international and regional organizations, and stakeholders. Between open meetings, the Expert Group continued to interact electronically and held its monthly member virtual meetings over the course of 2021.

4. The twelfth meeting of the Expert Group, held virtually from 2 to 4 November, was attended by 388 participants, including representatives from Member States, international agencies and entities, and other stakeholders. At the meeting, participants reviewed the implementation of the global indicator framework; reviewed and discussed the work of the three working groups, on the measurement of development support, SDMX and geospatial information; updated the tier classification on the basis of the annual review of the availability of data and reviewed data gaps; discussed aspects of a metadata review, including activities of the metadata subgroup; and discussed ongoing work on data disaggregation and the future workplan of the Group. In addition, participants shared experiences and best practices relating to monitoring and reporting on the Goals at the national, regional and global levels, data disaggregation, data innovations and capacity-building activities for the Goals.

5. During the meeting, and via email correspondence following the meeting, the Expert Group reviewed and approved the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap and the indicator proposal for target 17.3.

6. In February 2021, Cara Williams (Canada) was elected by the Group as Co-Chair, replacing Viveka Palm (Sweden), who assumed a new role outside of Statistics Sweden. In June 2021, on the basis of the terms of reference of the Expert Group pursuant to Statistical Commission decision 48/101, the membership and chairmanship were rotated. New members were nominated through existing regional

---

<sup>1</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>.

mechanisms.<sup>2</sup> Karen Chavez (Colombia) was elected Co-Chair, replacing Albina Chuwa (United Republic of Tanzania). Ms. Chavez and Ms. Williams are the current Co-Chairs.

## A. Methodology review of the indicator framework and tier classification updates

7. In accordance with its approved work programme, the Expert Group conducted a review of the availability of data for tier I and II indicators in the global indicator database (as at 4 October) to assess country and population coverage for each region for which those indicators were relevant. The review was presented at its twelfth meeting. Six indicators met the criteria for being reclassified as tier I: 1.3.1, 1.5.3/11.b.1/13.1.2 (a multipurpose indicator), 5.2.1, 6.1.1, 17.13.1 and 17.17.1.

8. According to the updates to the tier classification following the reviews, of the 231 unique indicators, 136 are tier I indicators, 91 tier II and 4 relate to multiple tiers (i.e. different components of the indicator are classified in different tiers). The Secretariat will update the tier classification on an annual basis following the review of the availability of data for tier I and II indicators and post the latest information on the relevant web page.<sup>3</sup>

9. As at 8 November 2021, the Global SDG Indicators Database included data for 213 of the 231 unique indicators and more than 1.4 million data records. Data for six additional indicators are projected to be submitted to the Database in December 2021. For the majority of the indicators with missing data submissions, custodian agencies have indicated a projected date for submission, mostly in 2022, or have provided an updated data plan (some data submissions were delayed as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)).

## B. Proposed annual refinements

10. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [71/313](#) and the plan and criteria agreed by the Expert Group with respect to possible annual minor refinements ([E/CN.3/2017/2](#), para. 21), the Expert Group reviewed the list of indicator refinements proposed by its members and by custodian agencies and agreed on two refinements (indicator 11.5.2 and indicator 16.1.4) (see annex I) to be presented to the Commission for its consideration. The refinement of old indicator 11.5.2 to new indicators 11.5.2 and 11.5.3 splits the indicator into the two measures that are currently part of the indicator. The refinement allows for proper differentiation of the data series comprising the original indicator 11.5.2. The refinement will facilitate the assignment of series to indicators and is consistent with data structure definition annotations for data exchange. It does not add any new measure to the global indicator framework and does not change the total number of unique indicators in the framework. The refinement of splitting one indicator into two is an exception and will not occur with other indicators.

## C. Metadata review and Expert Group subgroup on metadata

11. One of the tasks of the Expert Group is to regularly review methodological developments and issues related to the Sustainable Development Goal indicators and

<sup>2</sup> The current membership of the Expert Group is available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/members/>.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/>.

their metadata, including editorial elements, grammar, consistency and coherence, as presented at the twelfth meeting of the Expert Group. In doing so, the group routinely reviews the metadata of the indicators in the global indicator framework, including when a custodian agency requests an indicator tier reclassification or revises the methodology of an indicator. In addition, the Expert Group formed a subgroup in 2020 to conduct a thorough and comprehensive review of the metadata, aiming to improve the overall quality of metadata for the indicators in order to facilitate data transmission and allow for better implementation of the indicators by countries. Following the rotation of members in June 2021, the subgroup invited new members to join. The following member countries are part of the subgroup: Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Malaysia, and Sweden. Originally, the subgroup anticipated that its work would run from November 2020 to April 2021, but the timeline was altered in order to allow for custodians to provide their metadata submissions in a new template requested by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in late 2020. The subgroup has begun to review the metadata already transferred to the new template (133 indicators) and anticipates that this work will continue until February 2022. Following the review, the work of the subgroup will be assessed for updated activities and the timeline. The work of the subgroup benefits from the work of the Sustainable Development Goals metadata translation project,<sup>4</sup> whereby metadata for Goal indicators are translated into other languages through the use of computer-assisted translation tools.

12. To facilitate the review of metadata, the subgroup also provided custodians with detailed review criteria to consider when updating the metadata, including an editorial and grammatical review, a consistency check and a coherence check.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Expert Group reiterated the review procedures for metadata updates submitted by custodian agencies, including the following:

(a) The Statistics Division sends out a request for data/metadata updates at the end of each year. All other metadata updates are initiated by the custodian agencies. The Division reviews the submitted metadata update in track changes. If the updates in track changes do not significantly change the methodology, the metadata are updated; otherwise, the metadata are reviewed by the Expert Group;

(b) The Expert Group provides comments or requests additional information and/or an explanation from the custodian agencies. Once all raised issues have been addressed, the updated metadata is posted on the metadata repository page.

#### **D. Enhancing data flow processes for global Sustainable Development Goal reporting**

13. In its decision 52/101, the Commission requested the Expert Group and the custodian agencies to continue their dialogue to enhance the data flow process for global reporting on the Goals, including by identifying good practices and further refining tools to effectively coordinate data requests to countries. The Co-Chairs of the Expert Group and of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, and the Chair of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System, together with some key custodian agencies, held two meetings, in May and September 2021, to discuss how to implement the decision and address the concerns of countries. At these meetings, the Co-Chairs and the Chair acknowledged that over the years the partnership between countries and custodian agencies had ensured the

<sup>4</sup> See <https://worldbank.github.io/sdg-metadata/>.

<sup>5</sup> See [https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-12/10a\\_b\\_Metadata-IAEG-co-chair.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-12/10a_b_Metadata-IAEG-co-chair.pdf).

dissemination of a large quantity of data on the Goals and that the common objective of Member States and custodian agencies was to produce good data for monitoring the Goals. It was also noted that data flows processes were different for different indicators and for different countries.

14. Some key recommendations and follow-up to improve data flows and global Goal reporting and data collection and validation processes were suggested as a result of the meetings of the Co-Chairs. In that regard, the custodian agencies are recommended:

(a) To spread out the validation process as evenly as possible during the year to avoid the concentration of all requests in November and December, also taking into account the end-of-year holiday period;

(b) To be more transparent with regard to the sources of data and the methodology used to estimate the indicator;

(c) To use user-friendly information technology validation systems (that include different formats), so that requests can be easily shared among concerned agencies within a country;

(d) To be more transparent with regard to the names of institutions that are contacted for the validation of the indicators in the same country together with the national statistical office (avoid using blind carbon copies (bcc) so that the offices can easily liaise with other national institutions);

(e) To give enough time, preferably at least one month, for the validation and avoid short windows that make the validation unrealistic;

(f) To be more explicit if the validation process of indicators comes with other non-Goal- related data, as countries try to prioritize validation of the indicators.

15. During the meetings, the Co-Chairs also reviewed discrepancies between national and international data series concerning population estimates. The Expert Group provided the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities task team on the use of population data for the global monitoring of progress towards the Goals with the national and international data series of two countries to serve as examples of possible discrepancies. The Expert Group will follow up with the Committee on this topic.

16. Another challenge discussed at the meeting was that of validating estimates based on satellite images, in particular owing to the time and resources needed and the lack of detailed information provided by custodians on the type of satellite images used. The Expert Group has requested the Working Group on Geospatial Information to explore the possibility of identifying minimum validation criteria or common parameters that custodian agencies should submit as metadata. The working group plans to start this work shortly and will involve custodian agencies currently using Earth observations for calculating Goal indicators. The working group has also been asked to take into account the work done by the task teams on the use of satellite and remote sensing data for official statistics and on Earth observations. It was agreed that the Co-Chairs of the Expert Group and of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System would continue to have regular meetings in order to ensure ongoing open dialogue related to data flows.

## **E. Sharing of experiences and best practices on monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals**

17. As part of its approved workplan, the Expert Group was tasked with focusing on the implementation of the indicator framework and the sharing of experiences and

best practices on monitoring the Goals, including on national platforms, dashboards, Goal portals and other progress assessment tools; communication of data on the Goals; data disaggregation; and addressing of data gaps for Goal indicators. In line with the workplan, the Expert Group invited countries, agencies and stakeholders to elaborate on different initiatives addressing those areas during their quarterly open meetings. In addition, the Expert Group developed a questionnaire to gather short descriptions from countries and the regional commissions for showcasing best practices in those areas. As at 10 November 2021, 48 countries and two regional commissions had responded to the questionnaire, providing short summaries in which they showcased best practices and provided links to websites and other information or materials and comments related to particular challenges or suggestions for the Expert Group.<sup>6</sup>

#### **F. Capacity-building for the Goals: capacity-building knowledge base of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the Expert Group**

18. In its decision 52/101, the Statistical Commission stressed the need for enhanced technical and financial support for countries to build capacity for monitoring, for the production of Sustainable Development Goal indicators and for the modernization of statistical systems. In response to that request, the Co-Chairs of the Expert Group asked for information on the capacity-building activities by custodian agencies. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System sent out an assessment survey to their members on capacity-building activities by custodian agencies and other organizations that support the production of Goal indicators.

19. As at 10 November 2021, 19 international and regional organizations and four regional commissions had responded with examples of capacity-building activities for Goal indicators. A capacity-building knowledge base web page will be developed from the responses on capacity-building activities, guidance documents and other resources provided by custodian agencies, the regional commissions and other international and regional organizations that support the production of Goal indicators and Goal monitoring. Plans are under way for the web page to provide information on capacity-building activities and resources according to Goal, target and indicator; topic (capacity-building covering more than one indicator and broader Goal monitoring areas); region (mainly with inputs from the regional commissions and other regional organizations). It will also contain weblinks and reference materials.

### **III. Work stream for data disaggregation**

20. In its decision 52/101, the Statistical Commission welcomed the dedicated work of the Expert Group on data disaggregation, in particular the establishment of a task force on small area estimation and encouraged further work on data disaggregation and small area estimation with a view to providing additional comprehensive guidelines and tools for countries. Past work on data disaggregation by the Expert Group included the development of a minimum disaggregation set, a comprehensive summary of disaggregation standards for all Goal indicators, a compilation of categories and dimensions of data disaggregation currently in place and planned by

---

<sup>6</sup> The information and examples will be compiled and be available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>.

custodian agencies, a compilation of policy priorities by disaggregation dimension, and a compilation of existing tools and methodologies for data disaggregation.<sup>7</sup>

21. As part of the best practice questionnaire outlined in paragraph 17 above, the Expert Group included a question for countries and the regional commissions to showcase data disaggregation strategies, publications, best practices of data disaggregation of the Goal indicators, and information on how countries are addressing data disaggregation challenges. The information will be compiled and will supplement the compilation of existing tools and methodologies for data disaggregation that the Expert Group developed in 2020. The work undertaken in this regard is aimed at providing countries with centralized references of useful resources on data disaggregation and best practices from around the world.

22. The other focused area of the work stream is to develop guidelines and tools on small area estimation for the Goals. Under the guidance of the Expert Group and the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys, the Statistics Division, in collaboration with many experts from countries, regional and international agencies and academia, has developed a toolkit on small area estimation for the Goals. The toolkit is intended to help countries to use small area estimation methods to improve data availability for vulnerable population groups; offering practical guidance and country case studies; providing guidance on the enabling environment for using small area estimation for official data production; and providing a space for partners to document and disseminate their small area estimation methodologies.

23. The toolkit provides practical tools on how to conduct the small area estimation analysis with references for more detailed information. It also provides specific country examples and case studies, covering different Goal indicators. Through consultations with experts and a number of national statistical offices it has been possible for the toolkit to be focused on the enabling environment required for the use of small area estimation for official data production. The toolkit also includes guidance on communicating small area estimation estimates to policymakers and the general public. It will be available to the Commission as a background document.

24. To improve statistical capacity on using small area estimation in producing more disaggregated data for Goal indicators, a set of eLearning courses are being developed jointly by the Division, the Economic and Social Commission of Latin American and the Caribbean and the United Nations Population Fund. The eLearning course materials consist of reading materials, videos, evaluation materials and projects. The courses, which will be available in early 2022, offer two learning modalities, for either self-paced learners or guided learners.

#### **IV. Working groups of the Expert Group**

25. The three current working groups established by the Expert Group focus on the following topics: SDMX, geospatial information and the measurement of development support.<sup>8</sup> Each working group is composed of members of the Expert Group and other invited representatives, as determined in their respective terms of reference.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/disaggregation/>.

<sup>8</sup> The working groups on SDMX and geospatial information were established in 2016, while the working group on the measurement of development support was established in 2020.

<sup>9</sup> The terms of reference, membership and other important information regarding each working group is available at <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/>.

## **A. Working Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange for Sustainable Development Goal Indicators**

26. The Working Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange for Sustainable Development Goals Indicators is composed of representatives of 12 countries and 10 international agencies and is currently chaired by Mexico. Following the release of the first official data structure definition for the indicators in June 2019, the global database was published in an SDMX application programming interface. The data structure definition has been regularly updated since, and both the structure and the interface are kept in sync with the global database. Data exchange has been established with about six custodian agencies and 35 countries. All custodian agencies are urged to follow the data structure definition dimensions and codes in their data submissions to the Global SDG Indicators Database and many, although not yet all, use the provided SDMX/ data structure definition compliant templates or submit their data directly in SDMX. The reporting burden is being reduced, and an increase in the coverage will enable both the Division and custodian agencies to fully realize the efficiency gains of automated data exchange.

27. Following the release of the draft metadata structure definition and completion of pilot metadata exchange in late 2020, metadata exchange was established with two custodian agencies and about 15 countries. The Division has converted all existing global metadata sets into the new harmonized metadata template hereby making all metadata SDMX/metadata structure definition compliant. Additional efforts now allow for the conversion of the metadata to the SDMX format and its publication at the Division SDMX application programming interface. As a result, as at 1 November 2021, metadata sets for over 160 indicators are available in a machine-readable format for the first time. Furthermore, the Division developed a beta version of the metadata visualization site, which enables the user to easily query for metadata and download it in a variety of formats including MS Word and SDMX. Additional efforts and resources are required to put automated metadata exchange into production.

28. The Statistics Division has continued to carry out capacity-building activities in SDMX for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, including a project to support monitoring of the Goals, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for 20 countries in Africa and Asia. Training has also been provided in partnership with the Asian Development Bank, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the African Development Bank and other partners. Capacity-building activities continue to be held in virtual format owing to the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Working Group has maintained its information site with links to the data structure definition, technical documentation and user guidance, and is currently working on an eLearning course on SDMX for Sustainable Development Goals indicators.

## **B. Working Group on Geospatial Information**

29. The Working Group on Geospatial Information, chaired by Ireland and Mexico, comprises 14 member States, nine custodian agencies, representatives of three regional commissions, and other invited groups and experts. The Working Group convenes regular virtual meetings and annual plenary meetings, formally reporting to the Expert Group. Owing to the complementary and cross-cutting nature of the 2030 Agenda, the Working Group also contributes to a report, with the Secretariat, to the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, under the



Committee's agenda item entitled "Geospatial information for sustainable development".

30. In 2021, the Working Group diligently worked to execute and deliver on the workplan conceived at its sixth meeting in Mexico City from 9 to 11 March 2020. Highlights of the Working Group include the list of indicators, which identifies 99 indicators that can be disaggregated by geographic location or where geospatial information can be used to directly or indirectly inform the production, measurement and monitoring of Goal indicators; the Sustainable Development Goals assessment matrix, which is a tool for countries to identify those in the national apparatus responsible for producing, measuring and monitoring Goal indicators with geospatial information; and the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap, which serves to directly respond to subparagraph (i) of Commission decision 51/101, in which the Commission encouraged further work on better integration of geospatial and statistical information to better monitor the 2030 Agenda.

31. As a strategic information and communications mechanism, the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap is intended to help to "build the bridge" and to promote understanding between the statistical and geospatial actors working with the global indicator framework. With a view to having geospatial and location-based information recognized and accepted as official data for the Goals and their global indicators, it provides simple and actionable guidance for national statistical offices, national geospatial information agencies, custodian agencies and others working within the national Sustainable Development Goal ecosystem. The guidance is set out in three phases that include details on how and why geospatial information is needed and how it can be applied to support countries in their national implementations of the Goals. In highlighting available resources, existing global geospatial frameworks, and innovative approaches, the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap is supported by a series of key actions, case studies and supporting guidance for each phase, including recommendations on the unique value proposition and opportunity that geospatial information can and does provide. It also identifies what needs to be done, when, why and by whom. It serves to convey how the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework, and other frameworks have an important "integrating" role in advancing the 2030 Agenda.

32. The SDGs Geospatial Roadmap has been thoroughly reviewed internally by the Working Group and the Expert Group, as well as by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management at its eleventh session, in August 2021. Following an extensive process of inclusive development and consultation by both the Working Group and Expert Group, it will be provided as a background document and submitted to the Commission for adoption.

33. The Working Group's workplan for 2022 was endorsed by the Expert Group at its twelfth meeting. The workplan contains details on activities for promoting the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap; developing a guidance note on disaggregation by geographic location; and collating use cases of how countries have validated the outputs of Earth observations and incorporated the outputs into their national Sustainable Development Goal ecosystem.

### **C. Working Group on Measurement of Development Support**

34. At its fifty-first session, in March 2020, the Statistical Commission expressed support for the establishment of a United Nations working group to further develop and refine the measurement of development support in line with the 2030 Agenda; welcomed the inclusion of member States representing all geographic regions, and

both donor and recipient countries, in the working group; and asked the group to build on relevant previous work in this area (see [E/2020/24](#), decision 51/101).

35. In accordance with that decision, the Expert Group established the Working Group on Measurement of Development Support, consisting of 21 member States representing all geographic regions. Each participating country was requested to nominate two representatives: one from its national statistical office and one from an agency dealing with development assistance measurement. Four observer countries also joined the Group (Brazil, Germany, Republic of Korea and Netherlands). Furthermore, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), OECD and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs were requested to provide substantive support to the working group. According to its terms of reference,<sup>10</sup> the main task of the Group was to further develop and refine the measurement of development support in line with the 2030 Agenda under target 17.3 (Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources). In addition, the Group was invited to make recommendations or suggestions on further work required at the end of its two-year term.

36. From May 2020 to September 2021, the Working Group conducted 14 virtual meetings under the guidance of its Co-Chairs (Colombia and Norway) and following its agreed workplan. All meeting materials and follow-ups were posted on a wiki platform providing full transparency to all participants and the opportunity for ongoing engagement and discussion. The Working Group reported to the Expert Group on the progress of work on a regular (quarterly) basis during its open virtual meetings. The Working Group's draft indicator proposal was submitted to a global open consultation held from 16 July to 27 August 2021, during which it received broad support and constructive suggestions from 112 respondents from across the world, representing a wide variety of stakeholders. Building on the constructive suggestions provided during the consultation, the members of the Working Group discussed and refined the proposal during its fourteenth meeting, held in September 2021. The indicator proposal was reviewed and approved by the Expert Group at its twelfth meeting, held from 2 to 4 November 2021.

37. On the basis of its extensive work and deliberations, and as detailed in annex II to the present report, the Expert Group proposes the following replacement indicator for adoption – indicator 17.3.1 (Additional financial resources mobilized for developing countries from multiple sources) – with its six subindicators for gross receipts by developing countries of:

- (a) Official sustainable development grants;
- (b) Official concessional sustainable development loans;
- (c) Official non-concessional sustainable development loans;
- (d) Foreign direct investment;
- (e) Mobilized private finance on an experimental basis (subject to review in the 2025 review of Goal indicators);
- (f) Private grants.

38. As part of its indicator proposal, the Working Group developed criteria and an approach that will be used to identify flows that can be considered as supporting sustainable development. The new indicator 17.3.1 is in full compliance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development by distinguishing flows of different natures and concessionality that have different impacts on development, thus creating transparency. It follows the

<sup>10</sup> Available at [https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/TOR%20MDS%20WG%20\(April%202020\).pdf](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/TOR%20MDS%20WG%20(April%202020).pdf).

recipient perspective. All proposed data represent new financing flows to developing countries. The indicator serves to build on existing work, in particular standard OECD and UNCTAD data collections and the work of the task force on the measurement of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development. It is underpinned by an initial conceptual framework on South-South cooperation developed by a subgroup on South-South cooperation<sup>11</sup> that will allow reporting by countries that practise this form of cooperation. Accordingly, OECD and UNCTAD would be co-custodians of the indicator. Exclusions were made following extensive discussions. The exclusions do not imply a judgment on the importance of certain flows or activities but rather reflect the consideration of whether they should be included in the indicator considering its objectives, the criteria for sustainable development, the requirements of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the need for clarity.

39. The Working Group discussed, in line with its mandate, whether international public goods for sustainable development can or should be part of the indicator. It recognized that that issue was being intensively discussed at the highest political levels and in different forums but concluded that there was still no universally accepted concept of international public goods or framework for their measurement. Furthermore, it recognized the challenges in reconciling the notion of “global public goods”, where all countries may benefit, with the specific focus of target 17.3 on mobilizing additional resources for developing countries. At the same time, the Working Group noted the great importance of global or regional efforts supporting the Goals and the need for their measurement. The Working Group therefore recommended to the Expert Group a further review of the issue of measurement of the global and regional efforts to support the Goals. Such a review should include suggestions and outline possible options on how to address the issue, bearing in mind relevant discussions held at the United Nations and other forums. It was proposed that one or several member States conduct a review of the issue as outlined in the recommendation of the Working Group and report back to the Commission at its next meeting. Detailed information about the work of the Working Group, which fulfilled its objectives and completed its tasks according to its terms of reference, will be available to the Commission as a background document.

## V. Work programme of the Expert Group

40. The Expert Group recommends that the following activities be carried out between March 2022 and March 2023:

(a) Focus on the implementation of the indicator framework, including integrating geospatial information and statistics; sharing experiences and best practices on monitoring the Goals, including on national Sustainable Development Goal platforms, dashboards and portals, communication of data for the Goals, data disaggregation, and national efforts in bridging data gaps for Goal indicators; encouraging data innovations; and reviewing and making recommendations on capacity-building for the Goals in coordination with the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

<sup>11</sup> The member countries were Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Ghana, India (Chair), Mexico, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Russian Federation and OECD were observers, and UNCTAD provided the Secretariat. In a briefing organized by UNCTAD on 17 September 2021, countries of the Group of 77 and China were informed of the progress on the new indicator proposal and about the conceptual framework for the measurement of South-South cooperation. Participants appreciated the briefing and welcomed the indicator proposal.

(b) Review regularly methodological developments and issues related to the indicators and their metadata, based on the new metadata template, and improve the overall quality of metadata for the indicators through the work programme of the metadata subgroup;

(c) Continue the work stream on data disaggregation in order to provide further guidelines and liaise with the other working groups and existing mechanisms for data disaggregation work;

(d) Continue the work of the Expert Group working groups on SDMX and geospatial information, and review the workplans of the working groups to ensure that they are in line with the work of the Expert Group;

(e) Continue dialogues with custodian agencies to enhance the data flow process for global reporting on the Goals;

(f) Hold quarterly open meetings and the thirteenth meeting of the Expert Group in the fourth quarter of 2022 and continue to interact through monthly meetings.

## **VI. Action to be taken by the Statistical Commission**

### **41. The Commission is invited:**

(a) **To take note of the work conducted by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators in response to the decisions of the Commission;**

(b) **To express its views on and adopt the annual refinements (as contained in annex I to the present report);**

(c) **To take note of the background documents on the report of the Working Group on Measurement of Development Support on its work and the indicator proposal for target 17.3 and on the toolkit for using small area estimation for the Goals;**

(d) **To express its views and adopt the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap (as contained in a background document);**

(e) **To express its views on and adopt new indicator 17.3.1 and request to have OECD and UNCTAD be the co-custodians of the indicator; and to agree to dissolve the Working Group on Measurement of Development Support as it has completed its mandate;**

(f) **To express its views and approve the proposed way forward on a further review of the issue of measurement of the global and regional efforts in support of the Goals, as outlined in paragraph 39 above, and provide suggestions on how to address it;**

(g) **To express its views and adopt the proposed work programme of the Expert Group for 2022.**

## Annex I

### Annual refinements to be made to the global indicator framework

*Goal and current indicator text (contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)*

*Refinement of indicator*

---

#### **Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

11.5.2 Direct economic loss in relation to global GDP, damage to critical infrastructure and number of disruptions to basic services, attributed to disasters

11.5.2 Direct economic loss attributed to disasters in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP)

11.5.3 Damage to critical infrastructure and number of disruptions to basic services, attributed to disasters

#### **Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live

16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live after dark

---

*Note:* The proposed refinement of old indicator 11.5.2 constitutes an editorial change to address an inconsistency in the framework. The refinement facilitates the assignment of data series to indicators and is consistent with data structure definition annotations for data exchange. The proposed new indicator 11.5.2 becomes a multipurpose indicator, comprising a repeat of indicator 1.5.2. The proposed indicator 11.5.3 is a new unique indicator.

## Annex II

### Proposed indicator for Sustainable Development Goal target 17.3

The main objective of the Working Group on Measurement of Development Support of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators is to further develop and refine the measurement of development support in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see E/2020/24, decision 51/101) under target 17.3 (Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources). The present annex provides an outline of the final indicator proposal and the proposed reporting on a replacement indicator 17.3.1. The outline contains three sections: a list of the sustainable development criteria agreed by the Working Group; details on the proposed indicator and its subindicators; and notes referring to the indicator.

#### I. Sustainable development criteria

On the basis of the Working Group's discussions, and building on the work of the task force on the measurement of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development, the following cascading approach will be used to identify flows that can be considered as supporting sustainable development:

1. Flows within the proposed indicators and subindicators detailed below and identified individually, such as a specific activity in provider reporting systems, should be included if they directly support either at least one of the Sustainable Development Goal targets; or an objective in the recipient country's development plan as long as this is directed towards supporting or achieving sustainable development, with the following exceptions:

(a) Flows for activities where a substantial detrimental effect is anticipated on one or more of the other targets;

(b) Flows where the recipient country, after discussion with the custodian agency and/or the reporting provider country, objects to their characterization as supporting its sustainable development.<sup>1</sup>

2. Flows, or portions of flows within the proposed indicators and subindicators detailed below, for which data are only available at the aggregate country-to-country level, are also considered as supporting sustainable development, subject to the same exceptions as those indicated under 1 (a) and (b).

It should be noted that some subindicators may contain a mixture of activity-specific and aggregate-level flow data and therefore require assessment against points 1 and 2, respectively. It should also be noted that further specific exclusions are proposed, as detailed below, which may in some cases be considered to reinforce the focus of the proposed indicators on the sustainable development of developing countries.

<sup>1</sup> The custodian agencies are requested to establish mechanisms for validation based on the criteria outlined in this section which will adequately support concerns of the recipient countries.

## II. Proposed indicator

The proposed new indicator 17.3.1 contains subindicators for each developing country's<sup>2</sup> gross receipts of the financing flows itemized below, but in some cases on conditions, or with reservations, as follows:

### (a) 17.3.1 Official sustainable development grants

Grants are transfers of resources for which no repayment is required.

- Some providers<sup>3</sup> will be reporting official sustainable development grants to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Some providers will report to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) according to the agreed conceptual framework on South-South cooperation developed by the subgroup on South-South cooperation,<sup>4</sup> subject to pilot testing.<sup>5</sup> Within that framework, the modality “Non-refundable grants” is expected to closely correspond to the official sustainable development grants. Also, the modality “Direct cash transfers” is to be considered for inclusion.

### (b) 17.3.1 Official concessional sustainable development loans

Official concessional loans are loans with at least a 35 per cent grant element, calculated using a 5 per cent discount rate.

- Some providers will report official concessional sustainable development loans to OECD
- Some providers will report to UNCTAD according to the agreed conceptual framework on South-South cooperation, subject to pilot testing. The modality “Interest-free loans” plus parts of the modality “Loans” correspond to official concessional sustainable development loans.

### (c) 17.3.1 Official non-concessional sustainable development loans

Official non-concessional loans are loans with less than a 35 per cent grant element, calculated using a 5 per cent discount rate.

- Some providers will report official non-concessional sustainable development loans to OECD
- Some providers will report to UNCTAD according to the agreed conceptual framework on South-South cooperation, subject to pilot testing. Parts of the modality “Loans” correspond to official non-concessional sustainable development loans.

<sup>2</sup> See the first note under section III of the present annex for an explanation of the recipient perspective.

<sup>3</sup> UNCTAD and OECD as co-custodians are requested to ensure that there are no overlaps in global reporting for this indicator in cases in which countries or multilaterals provide their information to both organizations.

<sup>4</sup> The member countries were Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Ghana, India (Chair), Mexico, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Russian Federation and OECD were observers, and UNCTAD provided the secretariat.

<sup>5</sup> UNCTAD will provide data on components of South-South cooperation following the indicator proposal if so desired by its membership.

**(d) 17.3.1 Foreign direct investment**

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a critical source of private finance and part of the current indicator 17.3.1. There are concerns about whether all FDI meets the sustainability criteria; however, FDI is reported by the recipient country itself, giving it the ability to address such concerns with the national reporting entity. FDI will be measured as each developing country's inflows (inward FDI).

FDI is reported to UNCTAD according to the current reporting arrangements. Reporting countries and UNCTAD are requested to investigate how to apply the sustainable development criteria.

**(e) 17.3.1 Mobilized private finance on an experimental basis<sup>6</sup>**

This consists of private flows mobilized through official interventions (excluding those mobilized in recipient countries themselves) in the following seven categories:

- (i) Free, subsidized, or unsubsidized guarantees on loans and investments to developing countries;
- (ii) Lines of credit;
- (iii) Direct investment in companies / special purpose vehicles;
- (iv) Simple cofinancing, including technical assistance and capacity-building;
- (v) Shares in collective investment vehicles;
- (vi) Syndicated loans;
- (vii) Project finance schemes.

Mobilized private finance captures a portion of private flows mobilized by development partners that are of increasing importance. However, concerns and questions have been raised regarding its boundaries, the ability of recipient countries to verify whether the flow meets the sustainability criteria, and the fact that the available data as presented in the pilot study conducted by OECD relates to private sector commitments instead of developing countries' actual receipts of disbursements as for all other flows.

The Working Group recognized that although reporting on commitments is based on written agreements backed by the necessary funds, it would be more useful to have reporting on actual disbursements as is done for all other subindicators. OECD, which developed this indicator, agreed to investigate the feasibility of providing such reporting on a disbursement basis.

Funds mobilized within recipient countries themselves are excluded, as they do not constitute a new inflow to those countries.

Therefore, mobilized private finance is included on an experimental basis, subject to reconsideration in the 2025 review. It should cover and be disaggregated by flows originating in (a) high-income countries; (b) low- and middle-income countries; and (c) multiple/unknown countries. However, it should exclude flows known to be mobilized in recipient countries.<sup>7</sup>

- Some providers will report on mobilized private finance to OECD

<sup>6</sup> This indicator is included on the basis of its being a memorandum item in the sense that in some countries there may be overlap with FDI, especially concerning items (i), (iii), and (v).

<sup>7</sup> The suggested disaggregation will create transparency on the origin of flows and should thus support the conceptual understanding and further development of this indicator.



- Mobilized private finance is not part of the conceptual framework of South-South cooperation. Some providers that are engaging in this form of development finance may approach UNCTAD regarding the pilot testing and further development of this indicator for wider and global application.

**(f) 17.3.1 Private grants**

The concept of private grants is clear, the flow is fully concessional, and there is substantial support in principle for including a sub-indicator on these flows. However, existing reporting is patchy with detailed recipient information only available from philanthropic foundations. Nevertheless, this sub-indicator is included in the expectation that inclusion will encourage more complete reporting.

- Some providers will report on private grants to OECD
- Private grants are not part of the conceptual framework of South-South cooperation. Some providers can report on private grants to UNCTAD on a voluntary basis as part of a pilot exercise.

### III. Notes

1. While the subindicators follow the recipient perspective, the data for all proposed subindicators except foreign direct investment are reportable by the providers.
2. Subindicators (b) and (c) on loans are measured in terms of gross flows. Net measures would tend either towards zero (if only principal repayments were deducted from the gross flow) or towards negative numbers (if both principal and interest payments were deducted). Net flows on loans (deducting principal payments only) are included in total official development assistance figures in indicator 17.2.1 and developing countries' total public debt service (counting both principal and interest payments) is reported in indicator 17.4.1.
3. Exclusions within the above flows: debt relief, in-donor refugee costs, administrative costs not allocated to specific development activities, and peace and security expenditures other than those reportable as ODA are excluded. While excluded from the indicator for substantive and technical reasons, the importance of debt relief and its measurement is recognized by the Working Group.<sup>8</sup>
4. Excluded flows:
  - Private non-concessional loans
  - Portfolio investment

<sup>8</sup> The exclusions under notes 3 and 4 are the outcome of extensive discussions within the Working Group and are based on conceptual and technical considerations. The Working Group focused especially on the need for the indicators to capture additional resources for developing countries that are likely to contribute to their sustainable development. While the proposal includes official lending and official and private FDI, it excludes private flows that are both profit-seeking and debt-creating. The proceedings of the Working Group include detailed reasons for each of the exclusions, which ensure the clarity, simplicity, transparency and consistency of the proposed subindicators over time. In particular, the exclusions ensure that the subindicators clearly identify and distinguish flows of a different nature and concessionality in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. While there was broad support for all exclusions during the discussions of the Working Group and the open consultation, and while there were relatively few objections to specific exclusions, some countries nevertheless believe that all exclusions should be reviewed in the context of the 2025 review.

- Export credits, whether official, officially supported, or private
  - Short-term flows with an original maturity of 1 year or less
  - Any other flows that are not within the scope of the proposed subindicators
-