



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2014

Original: English

Statistical Commission

Forty-sixth session

3-6 March 2015

Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*

**Items for discussion and decision: data in support of the
post-2015 development agenda: broader measures of progress**

Report of the Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures of progress

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2014/219 of 13 June 2014, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report by the Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress. The report provides information about the activities of the Friends of the Chair Group since the last session of the Statistical Commission and about key activities of others important for the implementation of a monitoring framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda. The report presents a road map for the development and implementation of an indicator and monitoring framework for the post-2015 development agenda. In particular the report discusses the development of the post-2015 indicator framework. Information on an expert group meeting on this topic taking place preceding the session of the Commission will be provided in a background document. Moreover, the report discusses expected data requirements and data gaps based on the first results of a survey to countries, whose full results are presented in a second background document. The main report examines actions to close those data gaps. Recommendations and a schedule to carry the work forward will be submitted. Furthermore, the report suggests a workplan of the Friends of the Chair Group and provides points for discussion. The Commission is invited to express its views on the proposals made in section V of the report.

* E/CN.3/2015/1.



Report of the Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures of progress

I. Background

A. Role and activities of the Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures

1. At its forty-fourth session, in 2013, the Statistical Commission created the Friends of the Chair Group on Broader Measures of Progress (decision 44/114) as a response to the request of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2012, to launch a programme of work on broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product (GDP) in order to better inform policy decisions. The mandate given by the Commission was to build a work programme to develop broader measures of progress based on a stocktaking exercise of current national, regional and international practices in this field. The group was also requested to monitor closely the ongoing debate on development frameworks and to keep the Bureau of the Statistical Commission informed, undertaking an active dialogue with United Nations bodies and the policy sphere in order to ensure that a robust statistical measurement approach is incorporated from the outset in preparations for the post-2015 development agenda.

2. The work of the Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures and its support to the intergovernmental process during 2013 are described in the report of the Friends of the Chair Group to the Commission at its forty-fifth session. During 2014, the following activities were undertaken by the Friends of the Chair Group:

(a) In March 2014, the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission officially transmitted a compendium of 29 statistical notes to the Co-Chairs of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals as input to the deliberations on the sustainable development goals. The statistical notes had been drafted under the auspices of the Friends of the Chair Group by experts from many national statistical offices and international organizations, steered and coordinated by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations;

(b) In March and April 2014, the Friends of the Chair Group provided comments on the indicator proposal of the Sustainable Development Solution Network¹ and an initial assessment of the 100 proposed indicators in terms of measurability, based on a consultation with Friends of the Chair Group members and international organizations;

(c) In June 2014, the Friends of the Chair Group provided the Open Working Group Co-Chairs a matching between available indicators and the targets contained in the Open Working Group's "zero draft", and an assessment of the broad data

¹ In its response to the Sustainable Development Solution Network indicator proposal, the Friends of the Chair Group expressed its appreciation for Sustainable Development Solution Network's very useful and timely initiative in the iterative process of arriving at a set of sustainable development indicators for post-2015 monitoring.

availability for these indicators in countries.² This input was based partly on the Friends of the Chair Group's work on the Sustainable Development Solution Network indicator proposal;

(d) During September 2014 the Friends of the Chair Group developed and tested a survey (a) to complete the compendium of national practices on broader measures of progress and (b) to obtain information on the availability of data for indicators to measure the sustainable development goals and the associated 107 substantive targets proposed by the Open Working Group.³ On 14 October this survey was sent to all countries.

B. Open Working Group outcome and further process towards a post-2015 development agenda

3. In accordance with the outcome document of the Conference held in 2012, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals was established in January 2013 to prepare a proposal on sustainable development goals for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session (see resolution 66/288, annex, para. 248) through a Member State-led process. The outcome document of the Conference held in 2012 also indicated that the sustainable development goals should be limited in number, aspirational and easy to communicate; that they should address in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development; and that they should be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda post-2015 (*ibid.*, paras. 246-247). At the end of its thirteenth session, on 29 July 2014, the Open Working Group adopted its outcome document (see [A/68/970](#)), which contains 17 goals and 169 targets and thereby concluded its work. On 10 September 2014 the General Assembly took formal action on the Open Working Group proposal for sustainable development goals. The General Assembly welcomed the report and decided that the Open Working Group proposal "shall be the main basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognizing that other inputs will also be considered, in the intergovernmental negotiation process at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly".

4. In the outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, convened by the President

² This document matched selected indicator sets (Millennium Development Goals, Compendium of Statistical Notes sustainable development indicator, Sustainable Development Solution Network) with the targets contained in the Open Working Group zero draft, and an assessment of the extent to which data for these indicators were broadly available in countries. The assessment was carried out in a short period of time, thus taking account of a limited number of countries, most of them developed. Furthermore, the analysis does not represent an assessment of the measurability of individual targets and was not meant to be a comprehensive analysis of all available data and indicators.

³ The selection of indicator sets used for this exercise does not imply any judgement of the Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures of progress or the Statistics Division on what indicators or indicator sets should be selected to measure the specific targets. Furthermore, if no indicator is listed under a specific target, this by no means implies that no indicator exists or that it is difficult to create such an indicator — it only means that the analysed indicator sets did not contain any indicator that matched this target. For further details, see appendix 2 of the questionnaire: Note of the selection of indicators included in the questionnaire.

of the General Assembly on 25 September 2013, Member States agreed to hold a high-level summit in September 2015 to adopt the post-2015 development agenda (General Assembly resolution 68/6, para. 26). Thus, the final phase of the intergovernmental consultations on such an agenda will culminate during the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly. As an input to the intergovernmental negotiations to be launched at the beginning of the sixty-ninth session, the Secretary-General was called upon to synthesize the full range of inputs then available and to present a synthesis report before the end of 2014 (*ibid.*, para. 25).

II. Review of activities on specific topics

5. On 29 August 2014, the Secretary-General established the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development to advise, as input to his synthesis report, on how to close the data gaps and strengthen national statistical capacities, to assess new opportunities linked to innovation, technical progress and the surge of new public and private data providers, and to utilize the data revolution for sustainable development. Five heads of national statistical offices, including two members of the Friends of the Chair Group, were also part of the group, contributing their perspective and experience as producers of official statistics and in the ongoing activities related to new data sources and other innovations.⁴

6. The Independent Expert Advisory Group calls for the strong leadership of the United Nations and recommends using the data revolution not only to monitor progress but also for achieving sustainable development and to address the growing inequalities in the access to and use of data. They recommend that a new funding stream for statistical capacity development be established, mobilizing domestic and external resources and strengthening the role of national statistical offices in their coordination function. The establishment of a mechanism to share technology and innovations was also recommended by the Independent Expert Advisory Group and it further recommends that a global partnership for sustainable development data should be formed, to mobilize and coordinate the actions and institutions required to serve sustainable development, including the establishment of a “World Forum on Sustainable Development Data”. The Independent Expert Advisory Group highlights in its report the need for a “Global consensus on data” to adopt principles concerning legal, technical, privacy, geospatial and statistical standards that facilitate openness and information exchange while promoting and protecting human rights. Data is a crucial pillar for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda as it is the basis for evidence-based decision-making and accountability. The necessary data revolution is a joint responsibility of Governments, international and regional organizations, the private sector and civil society. The Statistical Commission is thus urged to discuss the recommendations of the Independent Expert Advisory Group and to take appropriate action.⁵

⁴ In this context, it should be pointed out that the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development agreed to reach full consensus on the executive summary, while recognizing that in some cases it would not be possible to reach the agreement of all group members on individual paragraphs or sentences of the report.

⁵ See note by the Secretary-General on emerging issues (E/CN.3/2015/3), transmitting the report of the Independent Expert Advisory Group.

7. The working group on big data for official statistics is submitting its report to the Commission (E/CN.3/2015/4), and making proposals on how to carry its work forward. In the same context, a European Economic Commission High-Level Group for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services was set up by the Conference of European Statisticians in 2010. The Commission also has before it a report on the preparation of the Global Conference on a Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics to be held in New York on 15 and 16 January 2015 (E/CN.3/2015/5). A report by the World Bank (see E/CN.3/2015/10) on improving household surveys provides an overview of issues of availability, quality and accessibility of household survey data in low- and middle-income countries and makes a set of recommendations for their improvement. The report of Cabo Verde on governance, peace and security statistics (see E/CN.3/2015/17), also before the Commission, proposes the creation of the Praia City Group on governance statistics. A report of the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information provides information about the main findings of recent meetings, the review of its work programme and the establishment of plans for future progress (E/CN.3/2015/37). To help ensure that the data revolution serves the post-2015 development agenda, PARIS21 launched the project entitled “Informing a Data Revolution”.⁶ At the Friends of the Chair Group meeting in March 2014,⁷ the measurement of inequality and the disaggregation of data, and indicators for statistical capacity⁸ were identified as important issues which should be taken up further.

8. There have also been activities concerning basic data sources, such as the new round of Population and Housing Censuses led by the Statistics Division, the proposal by the World Health Organization for a programme to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics in developing countries, the use of business registers and administrative data sources, recommendations of the Conference of European Statisticians on climate change-related statistics and the follow-up work to develop a set of climate change-related indicators, in the report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (E/CN.3/2015/13) the Committee discusses the potential contribution of the System of Environment-Economic Accounting to the monitoring of the sustainable development goals, and activities in many other specific areas (see E/CN.3/2015/1), which are of high relevancy for the monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda. Guidance on the use and linking of survey and administrative sources to improve the measurement and analysis of economic disparities are also underscored in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Framework for statistics on the joint distribution of household income, consumption and wealth, and its companion report, the OECD Guidelines for micro statistics on household wealth. In the new area of subjective well-being, the OECD Guidelines on measuring subjective well-being constitute a

⁶ PARIS21’s project “Informing the Data Revolution” assesses the bottlenecks in some 30 countries with respect to the production and use of development data. The results of the cross-country and case study analysis can be found at: www.paris21.org and <http://datarevolution.paris21.org/the-project>.

⁷ This was the only face-to-face meeting of the Friends of the Chair Group. Otherwise, all work was conducted electronically.

⁸ Regarding the reporting on statistical capacity, the World Bank maintains a Bulletin Board on Statistical Capacity (BBSC) which provides information on various aspects of national statistical systems of developing countries, including a country-level statistical capacity indicator.

key reference. The activities of the Friends of the Chair on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics are also an important contribution (see E/C.3/2015/18). The European Statistical System has embarked on a wide-ranging review and modernization for quality and efficiency gains embracing the opportunities provided by the digital transformation and emerging data sources.⁹

III. Road map for the development and implementation of the indicator and monitoring framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda (initial road map for post-2015 monitoring)

A. Development of an indicator and monitoring framework and reporting mechanisms for the post-2015 development agenda

9. The Statistical Commission is the leading entity of the global statistical system and the intergovernmental focal point for the elaboration and review of the indicators used in the United Nations system, as indicated in paragraph 31 of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B from the outset. The Commission has been providing guidance and leadership in monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Commission and its working mechanisms will guide and lead the response to the statistical needs arising from the post-2015 development agenda. Specifically, the Commission is the technical forum for the development and implementation of the indicator and monitoring framework and reporting mechanisms for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda.¹⁰

10. The indicator framework will contain the indicators for the monitoring and reporting of global progress on the post-2015 development agenda. National and regional monitoring may utilize additional indicators. The goals and targets proposed by the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals and the outcome of the General Assembly process on the post-2015 development agenda, which will conclude with a high-level summit in September 2015 to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, are the basis for this indicator framework.¹¹

11. For the Millennium Development Goals the work on indicators was conducted by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal indicators, consisting of representatives of international agencies, regional organizations and national statistical systems. The group has been responsible for the global and regional monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. It is suggested to establish a similar working mechanism, including all stakeholders, for

⁹ Quality and new modes of collaboration and the importance of dissemination and user engagement to drive continuous improvements are at the heart of its Vision 2020.

¹⁰ There are other global statistical forums which are responsible for the work in specific statistical domains and which are represented at the Statistical Commission and its working mechanisms through their respective member organizations.

¹¹ The term “indicator framework” refers to the idea that there should be a coherent set of indicators that addresses the overall requirements of the post-2015 development agenda. The work on the indicator framework entails the selection of appropriate indicators and the description of their interlinkages. Another important step is the assessment of concepts contained in the targets that need to be measured.

the development and implementation of the post-2015 indicator framework (see annex I to the present report with the proposed terms of reference of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators). The existing global monitoring groups, generally composed of representatives of national statistical systems and experts from international agencies, working on specific indicators will contribute to the work of the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, new global monitoring groups will be formed to bring together national and international experts for the selection and definition of indicators to monitor progress in new and emerging areas covered by the new goals and targets.¹²

12. In February 2015, an expert group meeting with participation of Member States and specialized agencies will be organized by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations to discuss the various aspects of the development and design of the indicator framework. The Friends of the Chair Group, which through its support to the Open Working Group and its survey on data availability for sustainable development goal indicators has played a major part in the preparatory work for this expert group meeting, is expected to contribute its expertise, in particular as it concerns the conceptual link of the indicator framework to the idea of broader measures. A report on that meeting will be provided as a background document to the Statistical Commission at its forty-sixth session, in March 2015.

13. The following principles for the design of the indicator framework are suggested as a basis for the discussions:

(a) Existing and agreed indicators sets and proposals for new sets of indicators, be it from existing monitoring initiatives, international agreements, conceptual frameworks, thematic consultations or other efforts, and their conceptual basis should be taken into account in the design of the indicator framework as appropriate;

(b) The five conceptual issues of: (i) universality; (ii) inclusiveness;¹³ (iii) scope of the development agenda; (iv) interlinkages and cross-cutting issues; and (v) means vs. ends and focus on meaningful outcomes, as identified in the *Compendium of Statistical Notes* under Conceptual Issues, should be considered;

(c) The conceptual basis for the indicator framework should be discussed and elaborated as appropriate. The Conference of European Statisticians

¹² A very important input and starting point for the work on the indicator framework is the *Compendium of Statistical Notes for the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals* that provides information about the measurement aspects of the 29 issues discussed by the Open Working Group during its first eight stocktaking sessions and which was drafted in collaboration with Friends of the Chair Group members and the international organizations represented in the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the Technical Support Team. The statistical notes provide information about conceptual and methodological tools, existing and new indicators and data requirements, challenges and limitations in respect to the individual issues. It is available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc14/BG-FOC-Broader-measures.pdf>. However, it must be acknowledged that the statistical notes are based on an early stage of discussions at the Open Working Group and hence may only incompletely reflect the measurement requirements of the final goals and targets proposed by the Open Working Group.

¹³ The issue of inclusiveness is understood to refer also to the issue of inequality and non-discrimination.

recommendations on measuring sustainable development, having been reviewed and agreed upon by an intergovernmental process are a useful starting point for the statistical community. The outcome document of the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development, “The future we want”, and the Open Working Group outcome document represent the conceptual basis from a political perspective, which the indicator framework will need to reflect on and respond to. It is suggested that as a first step the Open Working Group targets should be mapped against each other and analysed with respect to the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) and the Conference of European Statisticians recommendations in order to identify interlinkages, overlaps and gaps.

14. The design of the indicator framework will also have to take into account the very significant mismatch between the capabilities of national statistical systems in particular in developing countries, and the ambition to report on a much broader set of indicators, at a much greater level of disaggregation, compared with the Millennium Development Goals.

15. Criteria for the selection of individual indicators have been discussed in different forums in the past and present. These criteria should be brought together, reviewed and taken into consideration as appropriate. For example, it has been proposed that indicators should be SMART, specific, measurable, available/achievable in a cost effective way, relevant for the programme, and available in a timely manner. In the context of post-2015 monitoring at the global, regional and national levels, it should be pointed out that indicators may not be equally relevant for all levels of monitoring and decision-making and that their fitness for purpose should always be considered. Existing recent references that contain criteria for indicator selection should be considered.¹⁴ The statistical notes provided to the Open Working Group should form the starting point of the discussion of indicators in specific areas, as they represent an inventory of information on the measurability in these areas that has been compiled with the wide involvement of Friends of the Chair Group members and organizations.¹⁵

16. The mechanism for the global monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals through the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal indicators is based on a system of specialized (custodian) agencies that provide global and regional aggregates and country level data for the indicators within their respective areas of expertise. Data are classified either as country data, adjusted country data, estimated, modelled or global monitoring

¹⁴ Lessons learned from Millennium Development Goal monitoring from a statistical perspective, report of the Task Team on lessons learned from Millennium Development Goal monitoring of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators (March 2013); United Nations Task Team report on statistics and indicators for the post-2015 development agenda; Conference of European Statisticians recommendations on measuring sustainable development (2014); Indicators and a monitoring framework for Sustainable Development Goals, Launching a data revolution for the Sustainable Development Goals, a report by the Leadership Council of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (revised working draft 25 July 2014).

¹⁵ As indicated earlier, these notes may not fully reflect the measurement needs of the goals and targets agreed by the Open Working Group as they are based on an earlier stage of the discussions.

data.¹⁶ It is expected that the system of custodian agencies will be largely followed also for the post-2015 monitoring, with a greater number of contributing specialized agencies owing to the larger scope of the agenda. The platform for global reporting should be updated by the respective custodian agency whenever updated and new data are released. Quality standards, especially for the provision of metadata and data review should be defined and followed. It is expected that there will be an annual statistical report on progress towards the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda to be issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, at an appropriate time to inform the political discussion at the intergovernmental process. Regional reporting mechanisms (through the regional commissions and regional organizations) will also play a significant role in facilitating the reporting at the regional level, taking into account regional priorities and ensuring a link between the national and the global level.

17. Global and regional post-2015 monitoring should be based to the largest possible extent¹⁷ on comparable and standardized national data and national reporting mechanisms, acknowledging and strengthening the coordination function of national statistical offices or other national institutions with a mandate for coordination. Efforts should be made to close data gaps by strengthening national statistical capacity and improving reporting mechanisms. International organizations must support these efforts to standardize indicators in accordance with international guidelines and assure compliance. Close cooperation between the specialized agencies responsible for global monitoring, national statistical systems and regional commissions and relevant regional organizations will be required, in particular to understand and resolve differences between national data and estimates produced at the international level, which should be minimized or clearly explained to ensure full transparency. Furthermore, new data sources, methods and technologies of data collection should be explored in cooperation with private data providers and sources.

18. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, in its capacity of the secretariat for global monitoring, should create a platform to bring together international data series, used to calculate the regional and subregional aggregates, and national data;¹⁸ develop a proposal for a sustainable development goal data user forum and for a sustainable development goal data analysis and visualization platform; explore the possibilities of creating a world statistics cloud; and explore, in cooperation with other partners, the use of data analytics tools for sustainable development goal data gathering and analysis and the development of an open dashboard on progress in sustainable development goals in the world, engaging also with non-official data producers and providers.

19. The design of the indicator and monitoring framework and reporting mechanisms should also take into account the various accountability mechanisms

¹⁶ See *A World that Counts*, report of the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, footnote vi.

¹⁷ Data on some indicators, such as CO₂ emissions, are produced at the global level only, although based on national data.

¹⁸ Monitoring at the global level is based on regional and subregional aggregates. The global monitoring will be supplemented by regional monitoring conducted by the United Nations regional commissions in collaboration with national statistical systems and other regional partners. Ideally, the regional commissions would join the global platform.

that need to be established for the post-2015 development agenda at the national, regional and global levels.

B. Initial assessment of data requirements and gaps and inventory of broader measures

20. Based on the proposal by the Open Working Group, it is expected that there will be a significantly larger number of goals and targets as compared to the Millennium Development Goals. They will encompass the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, economic, social and environmental, while taking into account cross-cutting issues such as governance, human rights, the empowerment of women, and inequality. Many of the proposed goals also contain several subgoals, embedding many targets, which would require a large number of indicators for monitoring. Furthermore, although the post-2015 development agenda aspires to leave no person or group behind, the required disaggregation of statistical indicators by age, gender, geography, income, disability, among others, is currently not available for many statistical areas. Overall, the Friend of the Chair Group concluded in its previous report to the Commission that the monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda as currently manifested in the goals and targets proposed by the Open Working Group would pose a significant challenge for even the most advanced statistical systems. Statistical systems in many developing countries will have great difficulty to comply with the expected new requirements.

21. In October 2014, the Friend of the Chair Group initiated a survey on data availability for some of the indicators that could be used to monitor progress towards the sustainable development goals and related 107 substantive targets proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals on 19 July 2014.¹⁹ The purpose of the survey was to inform national statistical offices of the expected possible new monitoring requirements and beginning an assessment of data gaps and needs for capacity-building. By 21 November, in time for inclusion in the present report, a total of 67 countries had replied to the survey, including 15 (of 83) low- and low-middle-income economies, 22 (of 55) upper-middle-income economies and 30 (of 75) high-income economies. An initial evaluation of results reveals that for all targets under Goals 3 (Health and well-being), 5 (Gender equality and empowerment) and 7 (Energy access), at least 60 per cent of countries reported that they currently collect data for at least one indicator that could possibly measure the target. Also, for the majority of targets under Goals 1 (Poverty), 2 (Hunger, food security and improved nutrition, sustainable agriculture), 4 (Education), 6 (Water and sanitation), 8 (Economic growth, employment and decent work) and 9 (Infrastructure, industrialization and innovation) at least 60 per cent of countries that responded to the survey reported that they have the underlying data for at least one indicator that could possibly be used to measure the target (the 60 per cent benchmark was chosen as it shows that a clear majority of countries indicated to produce data for at least one indicator that could be used to measure the respective targets). However, for indicators related to targets under the other goals, fewer

¹⁹ Goal 17 and targets on means of implementation were excluded from the survey as they do not lend themselves to the same degree to national monitoring and would have expanded the already long questionnaire even further.

countries reported data availability.²⁰ It should be stressed that these results indicate only the existence of data without specifying the timeliness and the frequency of the data collection and compilation. Moreover, the survey could not provide information on data sources used for each of the listed indicators. Also, based on the previous monitoring experience, especially in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, there might be problems with the compliance to international standards and/or other issues of data quality. A full analysis of the results of the survey, which will include responses received until the end of January, will be provided to the Commission as a background document.

22. At the forty-fifth session of the Commission, the Friends of the Chair Group submitted a partial compendium of broader measures of progress as a background document. On 14 October 2014, the Friends of the Chair Group sent a survey to all countries, requesting them to provide information on their most significant initiatives to develop broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to complete the compendium and allow an analysis across countries. The results of this survey and an updated compendium will be presented in a background document to the Commission.

C. Closing the data gaps and building statistical capacity

Methodological developments in specific areas

23. The statistical measurements in most of the areas covered by the proposed goals and targets are well developed.²¹ At the same time, globally agreed statistical concepts and definitions, methods of measurement and data sources for indicators are not yet well defined in certain areas and will require further development. One such area is governance, peace and security²² which relates to the Open Working Group 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) for which the Commission has before it the proposal to create a city group (E/CN.3/2015/17). Adequately measuring inequality (Goal 10, Reduce inequality within and among countries), will also require further development of statistical concepts and measures.²³ These two examples are illustrative of issues that might arise in the design of the set of indicators for the monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda and which will need to be addressed by appropriate mechanisms (see subsection III.D).

²⁰ Indicators for new areas, such as under Goal 16, are frequently not yet part of the regular data production of statistical systems, which, however, does not mean that indicators for the targets under this goal are more difficult to measure than targets under other goals. (See Compendium of Statistical Notes, which addresses the issue of measurability in various areas.)

²¹ This sentence refers only to the existence of statistical concepts and methods of measurement and not in any way to the ability of countries to implement them, which will require significant efforts and support in particular in the developing countries. (For an overview of measurement issues in individual areas, see the Compendium of Statistical Notes that was provided during the deliberations of the Open Working Group.)

²² See Compendium of Statistical Notes, Statistical Note 29: Conflict Prevention, Post-conflict Peacebuilding and the Promotion of Durable Peace, Rule of Law and Governance.

²³ *Ibid.*, Statistical Note 27: Promoting Equality, including Social Equity.

Recommendations of the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development

24. The final report of the Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, which was submitted on 6 November 2014, delineates a comprehensive set of recommendations in four areas, namely: (a) principles and standards; (b) technology, innovation and analysis; (c) capacity and resources; (d) leadership and governance.²⁴ While bringing the issue of data to the forefront, the report calls in particular for investment in statistical capacity-building to allow all countries to participate in the benefits of the data revolution and to provide the data required for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda.

25. The Independent Expert Advisory Group report is of particular relevance for official statisticians at the national, regional and international levels. Some of the key recommendations that official statisticians are encouraged to consider and that will need to be addressed (see subsection III.D) include:

(a) Principles and standards. The Independent Expert Advisory Group calls for the creation of a "Global consensus on data", to allow all stakeholders, including those beyond the realm of official statistics, to agree on basic principles covering issues such as data quality, openness, usability, privacy, governance, resources and capacity, etc., and to accelerate the development and adoption of the corresponding legal, technical, geospatial and statistical standards. In this regard, the report notes the importance of building on existing efforts, including the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the work of independent third parties;

(b) Technology, innovation and analysis. The Independent Expert Advisory Group recommends the establishment of a "Network of data innovation networks" for sustainable development, in order to leverage emerging data sources for sustainable development goal monitoring, develop systems for global data sharing, and fill research gaps, e.g., to develop publicly available data analytics tools to inform decision-making;

(c) Capacity and resources. The Independent Expert Advisory Group recommends developing a proposal for a new funding stream and innovative financing mechanisms to support the data revolution for sustainable development, to be discussed at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place in Addis Ababa in July 2015. This proposal should be based on an assessment of the investments needed for the establishment of a modern system to monitor progress towards sustainable development goals, and include proposals on how to manage the effective use of funds in line with national priorities and in a way that promotes and incentivizes innovation and collaboration. Further, the allocation of funds should promote private sector participation, the strengthening of national capacities, and the advancement of global data literacy;

(d) Governance and leadership. The Independent Expert Advisory Group also recommends the establishment of a "Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data", which would, among other things, ensure feedback loops between collectors, processors and users of data from all sectors of society, and enhance coordination and data sharing. In this context, the official statistics community may have an important role to play in leading specific initiatives

²⁴ The Independent Expert Advisory Group report is available from <http://www.undatarevolution.org/>.

recommended by the Independent Expert Advisory Group, such as the creation of a “World Forum on Sustainable Development Data” and a “Global Forum of Sustainable Development Goal-Data Users”.

Strengthening and modernization of statistical systems and processes

26. The modernization of statistical systems and processes is at the front of current initiatives in the international statistical community. An Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) High-Level Group for the Modernization of Statistical Production and Services was set up by the Conference of European Statisticians in 2010 to oversee and coordinate international work relating to statistical modernization.²⁵ It promotes standard-based modernization of statistical production and services in order to improve the efficiency of the statistical production process and the ability to produce outputs that better meet user needs. Among its main activities, the High-Level Group has developed a Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA)²⁶ and is currently promoting the implementation of CSPA-compliant services for all parts of the statistical production process.²⁷ Also, the High-Level Group has launched a project on the use of big data sources for official statistics, with the aim of providing guidance for statistical organizations on the main strategic and methodological issues that big data poses for official statistics.

27. The report of the Secretary-General on “Big data and the modernization of statistical systems”, submitted to the Statistical Commission on its forty-fifth session,²⁸ identified actions needed to allow national statistical systems to respond to the challenges posed by the emergence of big data. The report recommended, among other things: (a) more methodological research to allow the use of big data sources for official statistics; (b) investment of resources to enhance information technology infrastructure and capabilities for processing big data; (c) capacity-building and human resources training activities to acquire and develop staff with the appropriate skills (e.g., data scientists²⁹); and (d) establishing a legal framework for accessing and using big data, both within government agencies and from the private sector, and including a privacy framework that sets the ground rules for how big data sets can be combined, protected, shared, exposed, analysed and retained.

28. Following the decision of the Commission, a Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics was created in May 2014 to make an inventory of ongoing activities and examples on the use of Big Data, address concerns related to methodology, human resources, quality and confidentiality, and develop guidelines to classify various types of Big Data sources. The Statistics Division and ECE conducted a joint survey on Big Data projects in official statistics, to inform the

²⁵ The terms of reference of the High-Level Group are available from <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/hlgbas/HLG+Terms+of+Reference>. As at 1 January 2013 the membership consisted of the heads of the national statistical organizations and chief statisticians of international organizations as follows: Australia, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, United States of America, Eurostat, OECD and ECE.

²⁶ The specification of Common Statistical Production Architecture version 1.0 is available from <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/CSPA/>.

²⁷ See <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/CSPA/Implementing+CSPA+Project+2014> for more details.

²⁸ <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc14/2014-11-BigData-E.pdf>.

²⁹ Data scientists investigate complex problems through expertise in disciplines within the fields of mathematics, statistics and computer science.

discussion of and further develop the work programme of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics.³⁰ The International Conference on Big Data for Official Statistics in October 2014 called on national statistical systems to collaborate rather than compete with the private sector in order to advance the potential of Big Data for official statistics, and to put special emphasis on building public trust as a key success factor in this endeavour. Also, the conference stressed the importance of maintaining and improving the efficiency of ongoing operations while engaging in innovation efforts towards the use of Big Data in official statistics.

Enabling environment, institutional arrangements, human and financial resources and capacity development

29. The scaling-up of national statistical capacities and the strengthening and modernization of statistical systems for post-2015 monitoring need to address a set of constraints, in particular in developing countries:

(a) Effective institutional arrangements and internal coordination: The monitoring across the complete range of goals and targets has to be based on competency, legitimacy and sustainability and appropriate designation of rights and responsibilities and effective coordination across the national statistical system;³¹ the national statistical offices should have a clear mandate to lead the coordination among the agencies involved, and to become the data-hub for the monitoring, ensuring quality. Formalized working arrangements between agencies should be complemented by informal agreements between the involved agencies and institutions, as required;

(b) Sustainable human and financial resources: National statistical offices and the other responsible agencies of the national statistical system have to be appropriately resourced in terms of reliable financial resources over time, staffing and computing resources, both in magnitude and in quality to fulfil the task ahead. Given the broad scope of the agenda, and the requirement for more detailed disaggregated data and the large gaps in available country data as illustrated by the Millennium Development Goal monitoring, resources for statistics would have to be scaled-up very significantly to allow broad-based national monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda. Both, internal and external financial resources will be required. The building of human resources will require ongoing training, but also the retention of the ones that are trained, which is a major issue for many statistical offices, not limited to but in particular in developing countries;

(c) Capacity-building and technical cooperation: Not all goals and targets are equally important for all countries. Priorities, but also circumstances and existing capacities are different. Accordingly, countries will have to define their specific strategies, and update their National Strategies for the Development of Statistics or Statistical Master Plans for the task of post-2015 monitoring.

³⁰ A summary of the results of the joint Statistics Division and ECE survey on Big Data strategies and project inventory is presented in the report of the Secretary-General on Big Data for Official Statistics presented to the Statistical Commission on its forty-fifth session.

³¹ The production of data and statistics in particular in developing countries is constrained by a lack of internal coordination between the different actors such as the National Statistics Offices, line Ministries, and other public or private providers. A particular challenge is linking the establishment of an administrative system with the production of statistics.

International, regional and local capacity-building and technical cooperation efforts should align themselves with the national strategies and the priorities identified within them. International efforts should be demand driven and coordinated.³²

Elements and principles for a capacity-building strategy for post-2015 monitoring and data compilation

30. The implementation of the national monitoring framework and data collection for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda will require a significant scaling-up of statistical capacities to be funded by internal and external resources. Guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics were discussed at the 30th session of the Statistical Commission in 1999 (see [E/CN.3/1999/19](#)).³³ Those principles should be reiterated and reviewed in the light of the post-2015 development agenda, which will require data from all areas of statistics, and in the light of the importance of supporting national statistical offices in their coordination function and as data-hubs for post-2015 indicators, taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and priorities.

D. Road map and recommendations

31. The following road map is proposed. It may need to be adjusted based on the results of the ongoing political process, particularly as it concerns the decisions by Member States on how and when to address the issue of indicators, and any requirements resulting from the intergovernmental discussions on an accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda.³⁴

(a) January-June 2015: Intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda with input from the Secretary-General's synthesis report which Member States have asked him to issue ahead of the intergovernmental negotiations before the end of 2014;

(b) February 2015: Expert Group meeting on development indicators for the post-2015 development agenda;

³² For instance, the emerging interest of countries and donors in strengthening civil registration and vital statistics is to be welcomed and should be supported. Besides internal coordination, countries are exposed to various, sometimes not well coordinated demands from international organizations collecting household data for international monitoring purposes which can lead to a burden for the national system and provide false incentives with the risk of weakening the national system.

³³ In this context, reference should also be made to the 2004 Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics and the 2011 Busan Action Plan for Statistics and the final Busan outcome document (www.paris21.org/busan-action-plan). The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics is a global plan for improving development statistics, agreed at the Second International Round Table on Managing for Development Results in Morocco in 2004. A renewed action plan for statistics, "Statistics for Transparency, Accountability, and Results: A Busan Action Plan for Statistics", was endorsed by the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, in November 2011. The renewed action plan builds on the progress made over the last decade under the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, while providing directions for the decade ahead.

³⁴ Items (a) and (f) are part of the intergovernmental process regarding the discussion and adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. The establishment of appropriate working mechanisms indicated under item (c) is further detailed in paragraph 33 of the present report.

(c) March 2015: The Statistical Commission at its forty-sixth session will discuss and decide on the road map for the development and implementation of the indicator and monitoring framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda (which is described in the present report) and the establishment of appropriate working mechanisms;

(d) March/April 2015: Launch of new platform to inform about the ongoing activities;

(e) July 2015: The newly created Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators provides a first note (or report) on possible indicators and an indicator framework for the monitoring of sustainable development goals and targets, taking into account any guidance emerging from intergovernmental negotiations;

(f) September 2015: High-level summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda;

(g) November 2015: An electronic platform for the monitoring of the goals and targets will be launched;

(h) November/December 2015: The Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators provides, based on its previous work, a note (or report) on possible indicators and an indicator framework for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda agreed by Member States, reflecting the relevant decisions agreed on by Member States;

(i) February/March 2016: The Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session will discuss and endorse the proposal of the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators for the indicator framework (and the set of indicators) for the measurement and monitoring of the sustainable development goals/post-2015 development goals and targets, and will discuss and agree on an implementation plan; the proposal will be submitted to the further intergovernmental process;

(j) June/July 2016: A sustainable development goal baseline data report for global monitoring will be released, providing data and identifying gaps;

(k) March-December 2016: Possible release of national and regional baseline data reports;

(l) 2016-2020: Scaling-up of national, regional and global capacities to monitor the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda.

32. There will need to be multiple parallel work-streams which should feed into deliberations of the Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session, in 2016:

(a) Financing for statistical development and capacity-building: In July 2015 the third International Conference on Financing for Development will provide one opportunity to mobilize funding for the development of statistical capacity. Also, the approach to capacity-building in terms of its possible coordination, common strategy and partnerships will need to be further discussed. The timetable for this work-stream will need to be further developed by the appropriate working mechanism (see recommendation in the following paragraph to create a High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for post-2015 monitoring);

(b) Methodological work and strengthening of statistical systems: Methodological work in certain areas such as governance, the measurement of inequalities will continue throughout 2015 and beyond. Also, work on the use of new data sources, improved methods of data collection, and the strengthening and modernization of statistical systems will be intensified in 2015 and will need to continue thereafter. This work-stream involves multiple entities and groups which have their workplans.³⁵ The present report suggests to the Commission the establishment of a working mechanism (see recommendation in the following paragraph to create an Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators) which will guide the implementation of the post-2015 monitoring framework and which can review these efforts and bring them together for the purpose of post-2015 monitoring.

33. The following recommendations are made to carry the work forward, taking in particular into account the recommendations of the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development:³⁶

(a) It is recommended to create an Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators tasked to develop an indicator framework for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda within a very short time frame, to guide its implementation and to report on progress towards these goals and targets on global and regional level (see the suggested terms of reference of the group in annex I to the present report);

(b) It is recommended to create a High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for post-2015 monitoring to discuss strategies and activities for statistical capacity-building, in particular for post-2015 monitoring and their possible coordination and to address the issue of funding for statistics (see the suggested terms of reference of the group in annex II);

(c) It is recommended to establish under the umbrella of the Statistical Commission a biennial World Forum on Sustainable Development Data with possible regional and country-level events to bring together public and private data producers and users to discuss the latest data innovations and their potential use in post-2015 monitoring;

(d) It is recommended that the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators and the High-level Group for post-2015 monitoring actively seek input from the various groups working on the modernization of statistics which are expected to continue their important work.

IV. Work programme of the Friends of the Chair Group

34. The Friends of the Chair Group has further completed the compendium of broader measures of progress, provided critical support to the Open Working Group

³⁵ For instance, there will be a Global Conference on a Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics, to be held on 15 and 16 January 2015 (see report of the Secretary-General on transformative agenda for official statistics (E/CN.3/2015/5)).

³⁶ See also the report of the Secretary-General on emerging issues (E/CN.3/2015/5), annex 3 of which matches the specific recommendations of the Independent Expert Advisory Group with the proposals of the present report.

and provided important inputs to the discussions and work on indicators through a series of activities.

35. It is suggested that the Friends of the Chair Group should carry out the following activities:

(a) Continue to provide and facilitate statistical support for the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda as required, in order to ensure that statistical considerations are appropriately taken into account;³⁷

(b) Based on its work on reviewing the development of broader measures of progress and their implementation in countries and the agreement on a post-2015 development agenda, the Friends of the Chair Group will analyse the possibility of defining a framework or set of concepts for globally agreed measures of progress according to its mandate given in paragraph 38 in the outcome document “The future we want” of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992;³⁸

(c) Contribute to the design of the indicator framework for the post-2015 development agenda, in particular as it concerns the conceptual link of the indicator framework to the idea of broader measures of progress³⁹ and further activities for the development and implementation of an indicator framework, as appropriate and required; the Friends of the Chair Group will be represented in the High-Level Panel on post-2015 monitoring;

(d) Report back to the Commission on those activities in 2016.

V. Points for discussion

36. **The Commission is requested:**

(a) **To express its views on the activities of the Friends of the Chair on broader measures of progress and the review of activities on specific topics;**

(b) **Express its views on the developments of an indicator and monitoring framework and reporting mechanisms for the post-2015 development agenda;**

(c) **Express its views on the first results of the survey on data availability and on the considerations for closing the data gaps and building statistical capacity;**

(d) **Express its views and endorse the road map and recommendations to carry the work forward, in particular the terms of reference for the proposed Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators**

³⁷ The statistical community might be invited to provide support to the intergovernmental negotiations from January to June 2015 either through the participation in meetings, the conduct of information sessions or the provision of specific inputs, among other possibilities.

³⁸ For example, it has been suggested to integrate the new sustainable development goal indicators into the Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development (ECE/CES/31).

³⁹ For example, the Friends of the Chair Group could take on or be involved in the mapping of Open Working Group targets against each other and their analysis with respect to the three dimensions of sustainable development and the Conference of European Statisticians recommendations to identify interlinkages, overlaps and gaps (see para. 13 (c)).

contained in annex I, the terms of reference of the proposed High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for post-2015 monitoring (High-Level Group for post-2015 monitoring) contained in annex II and the terms of reference of the proposed World Forum on Sustainable Development Data contained in annex III;

(e) Express its views on and endorse the work programme of the Friends of the Chair Group on broader measures of progress.

Annex I

Terms of reference for the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators

1. The Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators will:

(a) Develop an indicator framework (and a list of indicators) for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda, taking into account existing efforts by different groups of countries and organizations to be adopted by the Statistical Commission;

(b) Guide the implementation of the approved indicator and monitoring framework, ensure the use of harmonized and agreed indicator definitions, share experiences with monitoring the sustainable development goals and encourage good practices and innovations, including in the area of national capacity-building;

(c) Regularly review methodological developments and issues related to the indicators and their metadata;

(d) Monitor and report on progress towards the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at the global and regional levels;

(e) Actively consider potential new data sources and explore the possibilities of partnerships with private companies, the research and academic community and civil society for data sharing;

(f) Regularly review capacity-building activities in statistical areas relevant to sustainable development goal indicators and make recommendations to be considered by the High-level Group on post-2015 monitoring, the Statistical Commission and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities;

(g) Review and support work by the Secretariat for the development of a sustainable development goal data-user forum, tools for data analysis and open dashboard on the state of sustainable development goals.

2. The group will consist of international agencies (which also represent existing monitoring groups) that are willing to support monitoring efforts in their area of expertise, the regional commissions and 10 to 15 representatives of national statistical systems (with at least a few of them on a rotating basis) which will ensure that the views of countries are appropriately considered. The Statistics Division will be the secretariat of the group, which will elect two Co-Chairs, one from a national statistical office and one from an international agency. The existing global monitoring groups, generally composed of representatives of national statistical systems and experts from international agencies, working on specific indicators will contribute to the work of the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators. In addition, global monitoring groups will be formed bringing together national and international experts for the selection and definition of indicators to monitor progress in new and emerging areas covered by the new goals and targets.

3. The group will conduct its work in an open and inclusive manner and will invite the private sector and civil society to contribute its expertise and experiences on indicators and innovative ways of data compilation.

4. The group will meet physically twice a year, and otherwise conduct its work electronically. Participation in the physical meetings is self-funded. A limited number of developing countries may receive funding, if available and according to practices followed in the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal indicators.

5. The group will report annually to the Statistical Commission. In its report the group will provide an annex listing the activities of various groups relevant for post-2015 monitoring.

Annex II

Terms of reference for the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for post-2015 monitoring

1. The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for post-2015 monitoring (High-Level Group for post-2015 monitoring) aims to establish a global partnership for sustainable development data and in this function will:

(a) Discuss strategies and activities for statistical capacity-building, in particular for post-2015 monitoring, including for the improvement of data literacy, and their coordination;

(b) Address the issue of funding for statistical capacity-building, including by developing proposals and advocating for resource mobilization and their management and monitoring, and identifying ways to leverage the resources and creativity of the private sector;

(c) Review and make recommendations, as appropriate, and in cooperation with the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators, on the issue of common (cross-country) data infrastructures to exploit the possibilities of new technologies;

(d) Mobilize institutions inside and outside the statistical community, and if required, coordinate their actions to serve sustainable development as deemed appropriate, thereby further extending the partnership.

2. The Group will consult closely with the newly created Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators on statistical capacity-building and will bring together existing joint initiatives for statistical capacity and technical assistance such as the ones taking place under PARIS21, the Memorandum of Understanding of the Development Banks with the United Nations on cooperation on statistical activities and other coordination and cooperation agreements.

3. The Group will include representatives of international agencies and regional development banks that have a stake in statistical capacity-building in countries, major donors, civil society and 10 representatives from national statistical systems, including adequate representation from developing countries. The Statistics Division will be the secretariat of the Group, which will elect two Co-Chairs, one from the international community and one from a national statistical system.

4. The Group will report annually to the Statistical Commission.

Annex III

Terms of reference for the World Forum on Sustainable Development Data

1. The World Forum on Sustainable Development Data, including possible regional and country level events, will bring together public and private data producers and users to discuss the latest data innovations and their potential use for statistics, including post-2015 monitoring.
 2. It will be organized under the auspices of the Statistical Commission on a biennial basis, starting in 2016; possible regional and country level events will be curated by the programme committee (see para. 3 below).
 3. The Forum will be organized by a multi-stakeholder programme committee, convened by the Bureau of the Statistical Commission, which will elect two Co-Chairs for a two-year term to lead the organization of the next forum.
 4. The Forum will be conducted in coordination with the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for post-2015 monitoring.
 5. The programme committee will conduct its meetings electronically, and occasion permitting, in person.
 6. The organizers of the Forum will report back to the Statistical Commission annually.
-