

## **Friday Seminar on Towards a Nationally Owned Monitoring System for the SDGs**

**UNHQ, New York, 27 February 2015**

### **Summary of the Seminar**

1. The Friday Seminar is a high-level seminar dedicated to topics of great relevance for the global statistical community, organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the Friday before the annual Statistical Commission session. This year's seminar focused on the monitoring requirements for the new goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda from a national perspective. The seminar was attended by around 200 participants, including those attending the Statistical Commission, policy makers, and experts from civil society, academia and the private sector.
2. The seminar consisted of three panels discussing different aspects of how to meet the new monitoring requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how the national monitoring should be conducted. Panel one had three panellists representing policy makers, statisticians, and academia. The discussion addressed the dynamics of the two-way relationship between politics and statistics and how to best deliver data to adequately serve the needs of policy makers and the whole of society and hold governments to account. In panel two, the two panellists from national statistical offices presented how national statistical systems deal with the challenges presented by the new monitoring requirements and ensure full national ownership of the process. Panel three consisted of four panellists from national statistical offices, a private sector, and a non-profit organization, and focused on how to utilize traditional and innovative ways to meet the data demand for the monitoring of the SDGs and how to make data accessible for users.
3. During the interactive discussion, the following key points were made:
  - National ownership is key for the development and implementation of an effective monitoring framework for the SDGs. The monitoring process must be country-led, politically backed and resourced, and integrated into the overall national development frameworks.
  - A country-owned indicator framework should be based on an inclusive and participatory process with wide stakeholder engagement. It should be comprehensive, linked to governance and reporting arrangements, and led and managed within existing government structures.
  - The SDGs are an integrated development agenda and require breaking down the “silos” approach. To meet the monitoring requirement, a paradigm shift in the statistical community is needed. The institutional structure of statistical systems

should be transformed and revolutionised, and the traditional stove-piping data process should be stopped.

- The work on building a nationally owned monitoring system should rely on a conceptual framework, which can build on the existing frameworks such as the ones developed by the Conference of European Statisticians, System of National Accounts, and System of Environmental-Economic Accounts. The United Nations Secretary-General's Synthesis report on the post-2015 development agenda also recommends that the private sector undertake mandatory economic, environmental, social, and governance reporting. In this context, work has been done to provide guidance to the private sector that will help companies enhance their sustainability management and reporting with a view towards the SDGs.
- For monitoring the SDGs, there is a need to build a solid information infrastructure that includes both statistical and geographic information systems. Users are an important part of the data revolution. In addition to a data revolution, an application revolution is also needed, to engage users. The importance of data access and open data was emphasised in the discussion.
- New technologies and geo-information systems can improve data collection and data utilization, resulting in time and resources saving and better informing policy making. In harnessing the potential of technological advances, there must be continual reinforcement of the existing data infrastructure, such as civil registration and vital statistics and administrative data.