

The UN Expert Group on Wellbeing Measurement - UNNES Update



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UN Network of Economic Statisticians

Background

The UN's "Our Common Agenda":

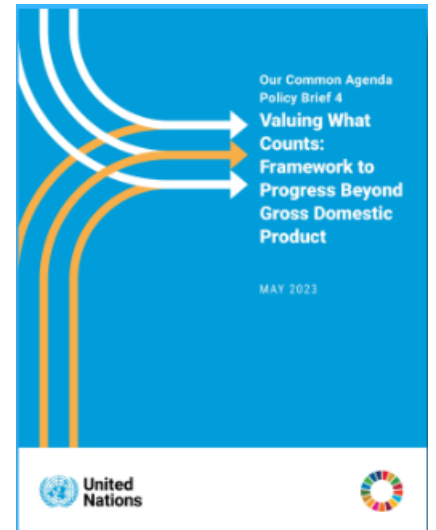
- Identified the need for a complement or complements to GDP that will measure inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity
- Challenges member states to identify and agree on pathways for national and global accounting systems to include additional measurements

'Valuing What Counts':

- Proposed a model of three outcomes (wellbeing in the here and now, wellbeing in the future and wellbeing elsewhere), and three processes (from vulnerability to resilience, participative governance and stronger institutions, and innovative and ethical economies).

The UN Network of Economic Statisticians, working with the Friends of the Chair Group on Social and Demographic Statistics, brought together a strong knowledge-sharing network of NSIs, academics and other institutions through 'Sprint Series' of meetings which aim to:

- Map and document the international conceptual and practical guidance on methodological standards,
- Provide collective capacity building and training around the latest developments in the Beyond GDP field.
- Identify gaps and opportunities to develop these further, in a way that will fit and support "Our Common Agenda".



Current Focus of Activity

Action 53

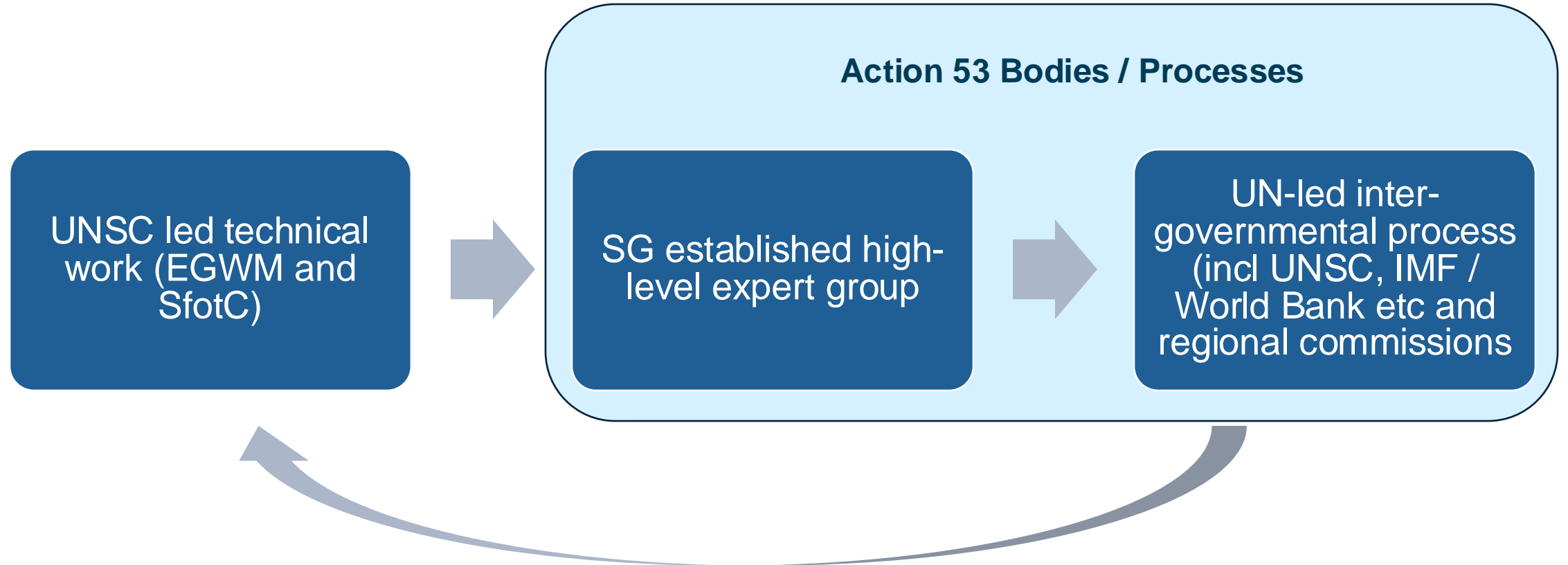
Action 53. We will develop a framework on measures of progress on sustainable development to complement and go beyond gross domestic product.

84. We recognize that sustainable development must be pursued in a balanced and integrated manner. We reaffirm the need to urgently develop measures of progress on sustainable development that complement or go beyond GDP. These measures should reflect progress on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, including in the consideration of informing access to development finance and technical cooperation. We decide to:

(a) Request the Secretary General to establish an independent high-level expert group to develop recommendations for a limited number of country-owned and universally applicable indicators of sustainable development that complement and go beyond GDP, in close consultation with Member States and relevant stakeholders, taking into account the work of the Statistical Commission, building on the Global Indicators Framework for SDGs and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to present the outcome of its work during the eightieth session of the General Assembly (2025).

(b) Initiate a United Nations-led intergovernmental process following the completion of the work of the independent high-level expert group in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the UN Statistical Commission, international financial institutions, multilateral development banks and regional commissions, in line with their respective mandates, on measures of progress on sustainable development that complement or go beyond gross domestic product, considering the recommendations of the Secretary-General's high-level expert group.

Process



Initial timeline proposal

- **October 2024** – Initial meeting of the EGWM to agree ToRs and proposed schedule of meetings with Network member attendees.
- **November 2024 – February 2025** – Proposed rapid development of short briefing documents from EGWM to help shape the work of the High Level Expert Group via six task-teams.
- **December 2024** – 2nd EGWM meeting presenting updates on task-teams.
- **January 2025** – 3rd EGWM meeting – presentation of drafting briefing note
- **February 2025** – 4th EGWM meeting – presentation of finalised briefing note
- **March (tbc) 2025** – High Level Expert Group is convened
- **September (tbc) 2025** - High Level Expert Group reports...

Proposals for development of briefing notes

Two task-teams covering traditional 'domains' to showcase mature data systems

- i. **Work** – a task-team, led by the ILO, to bring together a summary of the data which is available, against the 4x4 grid, in relation to key aspects affecting wellbeing arising from formal and informal work, stressing the importance of unpaid household activity along traditional concepts of paid work.
- ii. **Housing** – a task-team, led by Habitat, to bring together a summary of the data which is available, against the 4x4 grid, in relation to key aspects affecting wellbeing arising from housing needs and availability.

Two task-teams covering new and rising 'domains'

- i. **Digital Well-being** – a task-team, led by the UAE, to bring together a summary of the data which is available, against the 4x4 grid, in relation to key aspects affecting wellbeing arising from the social, economic, and environmental impacts of digitalisation, such as trust, security, 'fake news', mental health, remote work, energy use and e-waste
- ii. **Subjective wellbeing** – a task-team, led by Oxford Wellbeing Centre, to bring together a summary of the state of this rapidly evolving science and its capabilities and limitations to relation to the 4x4 grid.

Two task-teams covering long-term strategic issues

- i. **Composite Indices** – a task-team, led by UNDP, to bring together a summary of how existing composite indices map to the 4x4 grid and what lessons could be learnt to help set principles to down-select the strongest candidates for use in a final dashboard.
- ii. **Communications** – a task-team, led by the UK to assess different communications approaches and the key areas where the HLEG's views on how to optimise data presentation would be beneficial.

Key Issues

Two key issues

1. Whilst UNNES was asked to create EGWM, as a multi-disciplinary group covering a wide-ranging topic, the UNNES bureau proposes to recommend to UNSC that EGWM should, now successfully launched, report directly to UNSC.
2. To be manageable in terms of scale of membership, we have worked on a model where individuals represent their body, or their network (e.g. regional commissions). Nevertheless, we have received feedback we need to develop this model – either by clarifying the representation role of delegates, or widening membership to capture diversity of voices.