SDGs Unique Resource Identifiers (URIs) for UN documents and data

Briefing note by the HLCM Secretariat
to the Group of United Nations Chief Statisticians

In March 2017 the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) adopted the UN Semantic Interoperability Framework for normative and parliamentary documents (UNSIF) developed by the HLCM Working Group on Document Standards (WGDS) and based on the Akoma Ntoso OASIS standard. Subsequently, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination endorsed UNSIF and acknowledged the benefits of the Akoma Ntoso for the United Nations (AKN4UN) common standard.

The adoption of UNSIF laid the foundations for the establishment of a UN-wide ecosystem of machine-readable documents which will foster collaboration and reduce costs in information management across the system by transforming the web of information enclosed in traditional word processing documents into a web of data that can be interpreted by computers to create innovative services. Making normative and parliamentary documents available in a common semantically rich format will raise significantly the UN capacity to coordinate activities, create synergies and respond to clients' information demands, to improve the efficiency and quality of information processing, dissemination and accessibility, and to bring significant benefits to the Organization in terms of governance, accountability and transparency.

In the context of CEB efforts to better respond to stakeholders demands on SDGs evidence-based policies and to maximize the system coherence on the use of resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the HLCM has been promoting a **system-wide initiative for the adoption of Unique Resource Identifiers (URIs) for the Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators across documents and data based on "Linked Data" best practices**. The use of unique resource identifiers will strongly support the future reviews of SDGs achievements by facilitating the analyses of norms (policies) and outcome (data) and the formulation of new evidence-based policies. It will strategically narrow the documents/data divide and, in so doing, open new avenues for data-driven accountability.

It is to be noted that with this initiative the HLCM Secretariat does not intend to define URIs for concepts and definitions pertaining to the Goals, Targets and Indicators of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and their related statistical data sets, as these fall under the broader discussion on SDGs data interoperability initiated at the UN World Data Forum among the organizations dealing with the data domain. The scope of the HLCM initiative is limited to URIs of the SDGs entities that are shared by both documents and data.

Akoma Ntoso compliant HTTP-URI for SDGs

Against this background, the HLCM Secretariat is proposing to adopt the URI syntax used by the UN endorsed standard Akoma Ntoso[1] for the URIs of Sustainable Development Goals, Targets, and Indicators to urgently address the documents and data nexus for purposes of harmonization and business improvements. Before submitting a final list of unique resource identifiers for the SDGs, Targets and Indicators to the High-level Committee of Management of CEB for its approval, the HLCM Secretariat would like to place this initiative to the attention of the Group of United Nations Chief Statisticians for its technical review and endorsement.

At the best of the HLCM Secretariat knowledge, no UN entity has defined HTTP-URI for SDGs yet. UNEP has been coordinating the establishment of a Sustainable Development Goals Interface Ontology (SDGIO) on behalf of the Inter Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals (IAEG-SDG). However, the SDGIO focuses on specifications of terms and relations in the domain of sustainable development goals, targets and indicators. It has not defined unique and persistent identifiers for SDGs, Targets and Indicators using HTTP-URI since it is outside of its scope.

---

[1] A partial list of organisations using Akoma Ntoso can be found at http://www.akomantoso.org/akoma-ntoso-in-detail/use-cases/