

Meeting of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the UN System (CCS-UN)

New York, 4 March 2018

UN Headquarters, Room DC2-1949

15:00 – 18:00

Meeting Notes

A. Opening, adoption of agenda and participation

1. The meeting was opened and chaired by Ms. Angela Me (UNODC), Chair of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the UN System.
2. The agenda, documents presented and a detailed list of participants are presented as annexes I, II and III, respectively.

B. Data reporting and sharing for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: UNSC background document “Guidelines on Data Flows and Global Data Reporting for Sustainable Development Goals” prepared by the IAEG-SDGs

3. The chair recalled the work of the CCSA and CCS-UN on this issue: The CCSA co-chairs had sent the document “Guiding Principles of Data Reporting and Data Sharing for the Global Monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Version 1” to the IAEG. Angela explained the CCSA/CCS-UN position to the IAEG-SDGs during their meeting in Bahrain (11-14 November 2017) and later in a WebEx consultation with the IAEG’s drafting group. The WebEx also included UNICEF and UNDP. However, some misunderstandings seemed to remain, and the draft document that was before the Statistical Commission did not take the position of the CCSA and the CCS-UN sufficiently into account.

4. Committee members expressed the following concerns in relation to the data flows document:

- The proposal that international agencies should not be allowed to publish national estimates when countries are not in agreement may result in a lack of transparency and in outcomes that are not compliant with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the Principles Guiding International Statistical Activities;
- The requirement to conduct consultation processes whenever new SDG data are published, as described in the document, would have significant resource implications for both countries and agencies;

- Many data discrepancies between countries and agencies are the result of a lack of coordination at the national level;
- The SDG data flows process and outcome should take into account other intergovernmental processes and decisions;
- Global SDG data flows cannot be based uniquely on national reporting platforms, as these frequently are incomplete, contain proxies or have insufficient metadata; in this context, the work of international agencies in creating comparable global datasets plays an important role in harmonizing national data.
- Custodian agencies should not verify with members states data that other agencies have already verified.

5. Committee members also expressed concerns regarding a lack of transparency in the work of the IAEG-SDGs, in particular, regarding the process to review the tier classifications of SDG indicators.

6. The chair informed participants that UNSD had invited a small number of Member States and the CCSA co-chairs for an informal meeting on the topic of SDG data flows. The CCSA draft joint statement might need to be adjusted after this meeting.

Conclusions

7. The CCSA statement on SDG data flows at the UN Statistical Commission will include the points mentioned above. Some of these issues will be raised at the informal consultation with selected Member States on Monday evening.

8. Members were requested to e-mail examples to Angela of how withholding data that would otherwise be published may lead to non-compliance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities.

C. UN Common Identifiers for the SDG Indicators

9. The chair introduced the two background documents “SDGs Unique Resource Identifiers (URIs) for UN documents and data” and “SDG URIs” compiled by the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) Secretariat.

Conclusions:

10. The Committee decided that a small task team comprising ESCWA, UNCTAD, UN Environment and UNODC will look into the proposal and evaluate the possible benefits of a system of common identifiers for SDG indicators that differs from the numbering system already in place. The task team will organize a conference call with the CEB secretariat to clarify the purpose of the exercise and will report back to the group electronically.

D. UN Statistical Commission: Report of the HLG, in particular, the proposal of a UN Chief Statistician

11. Upon the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Benjamin Roethen (Switzerland), Chair of the HLG subgroup that drafted the document, “Does the UN need a chief statistician?”, briefed the Committee on the origin of the request for such a document and on the work of the subgroup, and answered questions from Committee members.

12. In general, the Committee acknowledged the potential impetus of the proposal, which might provide a means to:

- Better coordinate the statistical work of the UN system;
- Bring together statistics and statisticians in all areas of the UN’s work, including development, humanitarian affairs, and peace and security;
- Promote the status and visibility of statistics within the UN Secretariat; and
- Advocate for a greater share of resources to be allocated to work on statistics.

13. However, the Committee also raised some concerns about the impact that a chief statistician with a coordinating role for the UN system as a whole may have given the governance structures that individual agencies have with their own inter-governmental bodies. The Committee also expressed the need for UN system entities to be involved in the consultation and offered an open dialogue with the HLG and its subgroup, should their work on this topic continue.

Conclusions:

14. The Committee decided to prepare a joint statement to be delivered at the Statistical Commission.¹ The joint statement as delivered by the chair of the CCS-UN is available in Annex IV. The Committee welcomed the offer by Mr. Roethen to hold consultations before another paper is developed by the HLG on the subject.

E. UN Development Group’s joint Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) for the 2030 Agenda

15. The Committee welcomed the explanation provided by the UNDP Human Development Report Office on the MAPS but regretted that the office of UNDP that is directly responsible for the implementation of the MAPS could not attend. The chair informed that she was trying to arrange a meeting with the relevant colleagues in UNDP and will inform about time and venue in case other members wanted to join. The chair promised to report back to the Committee about the meeting, as appropriate.

F. Principles Governing International Statistical Activities/Quality Assurance

16. The chair introduced document UNSYSTEM/2018/2 entitled “The Principles Governing International Statistical Activities: Commitment to the Principles by principals: Status quo and follow up” and requested members whose principals had not yet committed to the Principles Governing International Statistical Activities to reach out to their principals to ensure that commitment letters are being signed.

¹ The joint statement was subsequently drafted by the chair and circulated and approved by e-mail exchange.

17. The chair also announced that the UN Statistics Quality Assurance Framework was available online on the CCS-UN website (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/unsystem/documents/UNSQAF-2018.pdf>) and thanked UNCTAD for leading the drafting process and FAO and UNSD for their contributions.

Conclusions:

18. The Committee will reconsider this item at its next session and will, in particular, discuss whether and how the Principles should be brought to the attention of the CEB.

G. Other business

19. UNICEF invited members to a breakfast meeting on possible support of international organizations for SDG monitoring platforms.

H. Date, venue and agenda of the next session

20. The Committee will hold its next session on 24 September 2018 on the margins of the 32nd Session of CCSA in Vienna (Austria) hosted by UNODC.

21. The agenda for the next meeting will contain the following items:

- Data reporting and sharing for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda
 - o National platforms (led by UNICEF)
 - o Toward a cost-effective consultation process for global SDG data reporting (led by UNPD)
 - o The role of the regional commissions in global SDG data reporting
- Proposal to establish a UN chief statistician
- QAF: implementation, peer review
- MAPS

22. It was suggested to invite (one of) the co-chairs of the HLG and the subgroup to this session for the agenda item on the UN chief statistician.

I. Actions to be taken

Action	Lead + participants	Deadline	Output
B. Data reporting and sharing for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: “Guidelines on Data Flows and Global Data Reporting for Sustainable Development Goals”	All members	5 March 2018	Contribute to CCSA joint statement Send relevant examples to chair of practices leading possibly to non-compliance with Principles
C. UN Common Identifiers for the SDG Indicators	Chair, ESCWA, UNCTAD	Sep 2018	Oral or written report to 33 rd session
D. Proposal of a UN Chief Statistician	Chair + members Chair	5 March 2018 Sep 2018	Joint statement for UNSC

			Prepare agenda item for 33 rd session and invite relevant contributors, e.g. chair of the HLG.
E. UN Development Group's joint MAPS for the 2030 Agenda	Chair	Sep 2018	Oral report to 33 rd session
F. Principles Governing International Statistical Activities/Quality Assurance	Members, whose principals have not signed a commitment letter	Sep 2018	All members ² submitted commitment letters Report to the 33 rd session

Annex I

Agenda

1. Welcome and adoption of agenda
2. UN Statistical Commission: Indicator Framework for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: Guidelines on Data Flows and Global Data Reporting for SDGs
3. UN Common Identifiers for the SDG Indicators
4. UN Statistical Commission: Report of the HLG, in particular the proposal of a UN Chief Statistician
5. UN Development Group's joint Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) for the 2030 Agenda (Briefing by UNDP, tbc)
6. Principles Governing International Statistical Activities/Quality Assurance
7. Other business

Annex II

List of documents

UNSYSTEM/2018/1 Agenda

UNSYSTEM/2018/2 The Principles Governing International Statistical Activities:
Commitment to the Principles by principals: Status quo and follow up

Background documents:

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

Does the United Nations need a Chief Statistician?

Annex III

List of Participants

(In alphabetical order of the organization)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Pietro Gennari Jose Rosero	Pietro.Gennari@fao.org Jose.roseromoncayo@fao.org
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)	Andrii Gritsevskiyi	a.gritsevskiyi@iaea.org
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United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Milorad Kovacevic	milorad.kovacevic@undp.org
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)	Tinfissi-Joseph Ilboudo	ilboudo@un.org
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)	Lidia Bratanova Andres Vikat	Lidia.bratanova@unece.org Andres.vikat@un.org
United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)	Pascual Gerstenfeld	Pascual.gerstenfeld@cepal.org
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)	Rikke M. Hansen	hansenrm@un.org
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)	Juraj Riecan	riecan@un.org
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	Alison Kennedy	a.kennedy@unesco.org
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)	Papa Seck	Papa.seck@unwomen.org
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	Ludgarde Coppens	ludgarde.coppens@unep.org
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	Kimberly Roberson Petra Nahmias	roberson@unhcr.org nahmias@unhcr.org
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)	Robert Ndugwa	robert.ndugwa@unhabitat.org
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	Shyam Upadhyaya	s.upadhyaya@unido.org
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United Nations Population Division (UNPD)	John Wilmoth Frank Swiaczny	Wilmoth@un.org swiaczny@un.org
United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)	Stefan Schweinfest Ronald Jansen Sabine Warschburger Gabriel Gomez	schweinfest@un.org jansen1@un.org warschburger@un.org gomezg@un.org
World Bank	Haishan Fu	hf1@worldbank.org

Annex IV

Joint statement to the Commission as delivered by the Chair of the CCS-UN

I am providing a joint statement on behalf of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System which promotes coherent and integrated system-wide United Nations actions to support statistics at the national, regional and international levels.

This statement is in relation to the background document submitted by the High Level Group on Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development entitled “Do we need a United Nations chief statistician?”

The Committee

Has been following with great interest the ongoing discussion within the High Level Group on the possible creation of the position of a UN chief statistician;

Takes note of the preliminary analyses reflected in the background document. Given the need to explore some aspects further, the Committee welcomes the opportunity offered by the High Level Group for joint discussions to ensure that the Group has all needed information on formal and informal practices in the United Nations statistical system.