Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System (CCS-UNS)

Vienna International Centre (VIC), Conference Room C2

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9:30 – 17:30

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Data reporting and sharing for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda - National platforms (led by UNICEF and UNSD)

Note by UNSD

Establishment of national reporting and dissemination platforms in countries

1.   There is a clear need to integrate, share, and use local, national, regional and global sources of data to support the 2030 Agenda. In this context, national reporting and dissemination platforms have a crucial role to play, providing the means to bring open data and statistics, and particularly SDG indicators, to all those charged with the design, implementation and monitoring of national development policies and programmes for the 2030 development agenda.

2.   Several international organizations and development partners are currently focused on supporting countries in their efforts to establish their national reporting and dissemination platforms. For instance, at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), a Task Force on National Reporting Platforms has, among other things, issued a practical guide and collected an inventory of national practices, all available on its wiki platform. [1]

3.   The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNSD), in partnership with Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID) ins engaged in a multi-year statistical capacity building project on SDG Monitoring in 20 countries in Asia and Africa. The project aims in particular to strengthen the capacity of participating countries to produce and disseminate SDG indicators, and to make national SDG data open and accessible to support evidence-based policies for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As part of this project, UNSD is collaborating with technical partners to facilitate the establishment of modern national reporting and dissemination platforms.

4.   There are many issues that still need to be addressed in the establishment of such platforms. For example, data retained in previously used databases have to be extracted, modelled, enriched with metadata, and transferred to modern data reporting and dissemination

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[1] https://statswiki.unece.org/display/SFSDG/Task+Force+on+National+Reporting+Platforms.

platforms. For this specific task, UNSD is currently working with UNICEF, OECD, AfDB, and ESRI and other partners to find feasible and replicable solutions.

5.   Achieving interoperability across data platforms is also a major challenge for statistical organizations, as the global nature of the 2030 Agenda requires data from various traditional and innovative sources to inform decision makers at all levels. Therefore, the way in which these platforms interact with each other, based on standards and technologies for data interoperability, is as important as their implementation in individual organizations.

6.   The establishment of modern national data reporting and dissemination platforms in developing countries requires sufficient funding and long-term commitments from donors and development partners, both to procure and to maintain such platforms. There is an urgent need to mobilize resources and establish new partnerships with donors and technology providers to meet the current gap in funding and infrastructure. One major challenge of supporting developing countries in the establishment of national reporting and dissemination platforms is that, unlike during the time of the MDG, no partnership has emerged so far to provide the level of support required by many developing countries.

Principles and guidelines for national reporting and dissemination platforms

7.   The urgency of providing strategic and technical guidance for the establishment of national reporting and dissemination platforms to meet the data needs of the 2030 Agenda, has been underlined in several forums. To address this need, and as part of the UNSD/DFID project on SDG monitoring, UNSD organized a conference on national platforms for reporting on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, which took place from 22 to 24 January 2018 in New York. The conference reviewed best practices, discussed and showcased possible solutions, and identified ways forward for their implementation. The conference resulted in a set of recommendations and guidelines for national data platforms for the follow-up and reporting on the SDGs. This document, along with the report of the conference, were provided as a background document to the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its forty-ninth session in March 2018. The Commission, in its decision 49/102, welcomed the draft principles and guidelines for national reporting and dissemination platforms and requested the Statistics Division to report to the Commission thereon at its fiftieth session.

8.   The meeting on national reporting and dissemination platforms discussed and proposed four principles for the design and implementation of national data platforms, namely: (1) Clear institutional arrangements and management, (2) Fitness for purpose, (3) Sustainability, and (4) Interoperability and statistical standards. These principles are intended to be universally applicable and all Member States are encouraged to consider them when establishing their National Reporting and Dissemination Platform

9.   The conference also issued specific guidelines directed in particular at countries that aim to develop their National Reporting and Dissemination Platform jointly with development

partners and solution providers, but which may be equally applicable to any country. These guidelines cover the following twelve topics: (1) National Ownership, (2) Collaboration, (3) Multilingualism and accessibility, (4) User-centered Design, (5) Data Communication, (6) Data disaggregation, (7) Modularity and extensibility, (8) Standardized interfaces, (9) Scalability, (10) Metadata, (11) Open Data, and (12) Linked Data.

10.   Based on its experiences during 2018 in supporting developing countries in the establishment of their national reporting and disseminations platforms, and on the discussions at two workshops for developing countries, UNSD will review the principles and guidelines, and following additional consultation with experts, provide them for consideration by the Statistical Commission as a background document.

Other global initiatives on open data, federated data hubs for the SDGs, and data interoperability

11.   The Statistical Commission, at the forty-ninth session, held in March 2018, created a sub-group on Open Data as part of the Friends of the Chair Group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, aimed to provide guidance and support for implementation of open data in countries. Additionally, the Commission encouraged groups working on big data, fundamental principles and quality frameworks to incorporate relevant aspects of open data into their respective work programmes, and tasked the working group with: (1) reviewing the principles and legal frameworks for open data, (2) clarifying technical aspects and skills needed and provide guidance on implementation of open data, including anonymization of data, as well as (3) mapping open data principles to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and addressing the need for principles and tools for data interoperability. The outcome of this work will be reported back to the 50th session of the Statistical Commission.

12.   At the same session, the Statistical Commission also welcomed the efforts by DESA's Statistics Division to establish, in partnership with Member States and technology providers, a federated system of national and global data hubs for the SDGs. Through this initiative, UNSD is working with Member States to build a modern architecture to support the global data ecosystem, to enable governments, international organizations, and partners from civil society, business and academia to openly share, integrate and make the best possible use of all sources of data and information for sustainable development, based on open data principles and the technical standards for data interoperability. This Federated Information System for the SDGs initiative is also leveraging web GIS technologies to facilitate the integration of statistical and geospatial information and fostering collaboration among different stakeholder groups to improve data flows and global reporting of the SDGs.

13.   UNSD is co-chairing, jointly with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the Collaborative on SDG Data Interoperability. This initiative is one tangible outcome of the first UN World Data Forum, held in Cape Town in January 2017 which is bringing together

experts from different data communities to share innovative approaches and develop hands-on guidance to address SDG data interoperability challenges across organizational and national boundaries, covering a range of recommendations and best practices in areas such as data governance, data modeling, standard classifications and vocabularies, application programming interfaces (APIs) and open linked data.