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through policy innovation and integration
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Briefing note on the work of Statistical Commission on global SDG indicator framework

1. Background

1. From June 2015 to March 2016, less than one year, following the mandate given by the General Assembly, the Statistical Commission through the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) worked very intensively on the development of the global indicator framework for the follow-up and review of progress made towards the attainment of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

2. The process to develop the initial set of SDG indicators was inclusive, open and transparent, involved a large number of stakeholders, through many interactive consultations. During the phase of consultations, the work of the IAEG-SDGs continued to be guided by the principle that the indicators should preserve the political balance and ambition of the Agenda. All indicators proposals were reviewed in-depth to ensure they encompass the targets to the greatest extent possible, including addressing specific groups of the population.

3. The IAEG-SDG Members consulted with many parts of their national statistical systems, carefully reviewed all the proposals and inputs provided by experts from a large number of countries, regional and international organizations, and other important relevant stakeholders including civil society, academia, and the private sector, and reached general agreement on the proposed indicators. A report of the work of IAEG including the full list of proposed global SDG indicators was presented to the 47th Session of Statistical Commission in March 2016.

2. 47th Session of Statistical Commission

4. In March 2016, the Statistical community was able to come out with the final piece of the architecture for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Statistical Commission agreed, as a good practical starting point, on a set of over 230 global indicators proposed by the IAEG-SDGs, subject to future technical refinement and improvement. The Commission underscored that the proposed global indicators are intended for global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are not necessarily applicable to all national contexts.

5. It was also agreed that the global indicators framework will be complemented by indicators at the regional, national and sub-national levels to be developed by Member States, in line with the principles defined in the 2030 Agenda. The national indicator framework for the follow-up and review process will be voluntary and country-led, will take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and will respect policy space and priorities.

6. The Commission agreed that the compilation of global indicators will be based to the greatest extent possible on comparable and standardised national official statistics, provided by countries to the international statistical systems and that when other sources and methodologies are used, these will be reviewed and agreed by national statistical authorities and presented in a transparent manner.

Furthermore, as the implementation of the indicator framework will present a challenge in many countries, the Commission recommended appropriate efforts to strengthen national statistical capacities and requested coordination between IAEG-SDGs and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG).

7. Finally, data disaggregation is fundamental for the full implementation of the indicator framework and to full reflect the principle of leaving no one behind, the Commission stressed the need to strengthen national capacities in this area and to establish a working group as a sub-group of the IAEG-SDGs to further this work.

3. Next Steps after the Commission

8. As way forward, countries have the primary responsibility for follow-up and review of progress made towards the attainment of the SDGs, which requires quality, accessible and timely data collection. Therefore, countries must take actions to mainstream the compilation of data for SDG indicators into the regular work programmes of national statistical systems and in the overall strategy for statistics development.

9. The Commission, through the joint working group of HLG/IAEG on capacity building will develop a Global Action Plan to address the immediate statistical capacity-building needs including financing framework for the implementation of the global SDG indicators. Moreover, the plan will address both short and long-term interventions, including a focus on building the infrastructure to support local, national, regional and global statistical, especially for developing countries, including African countries, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries, the small island developing states and other countries in special situations.

10. The HLG will organize the UN World Forum on Sustainable Development Data in order to engage in interactive dialogue and partner with all stakeholders at national, regional and international levels, involved in the production and use of data for sustainable development.

11. The work of the IAEG-SDGs will also continue to ensure that all goals and targets are appropriately reviewed and that the necessary indicators are fully implemented so that no individual or group is left behind and an appropriate procedure for the methodological review of indicators, including approval mechanisms of needed revisions or replacements, and the development of global reporting mechanisms will be developed and presented to the 48th session of Statistical Commission in March 2017.

12. In addition to the global indicator framework, regional and international organizations will continue supporting countries to strengthen and expand household survey programmes, population and housing census programmes, civil and vital statistics programmes, and administrative data improvement; and promoting the use of new and emerging technologies for data collection, processing and dissemination and analysis; and the integration geospatial data into statistical production programmes at all levels.

4. Conclusion

13. It is clear from the ambition of the 2030 Agenda that the task ahead is very complex and needs collective efforts involving all stakeholders to generate data for the SDGs. This will not happen spontaneously but rather demands deliberate and coherent actions at all fronts with national statistics offices at the driving seat for the successful implementation of the 2030 agenda.