

**Third Meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group
on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators**

Mexico City, Mexico, 30 March – 1 April 2016

Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico,
Av. Juárez #20, Col. Centro, Delegación Cuauhtémoc, 06010,
1st Floor.

Report

I Introduction

1. The third meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) took place from 30 March – 1 April 2016 in Mexico City, Mexico. The meeting was co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Mexico and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) and was held at the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Mexico.

2. As this was the first meeting of the IAEG-SDGs after the agreement by the Statistical Commission on the list of global indicators for SDG monitoring, the main objectives of the meeting were to 1) discuss the tier system for the global indicators; 2) define the global reporting mechanisms; and 3) establish procedures for the refinement of indicators and review of indicator framework.

3. The Chancellor of Foreign Relations of Mexico, Ms. Claudia Ruiz Massieu; the President of INEGI, Mr. Julio A. Santaella; Assistant Secretary General for Economic Development of UN-DESA, Mr. Lenni Montiel; and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms. Alicia Bárcena, opened the meeting. The meeting was attended by over 180 participants, including representatives of 24 member countries of the IAEG-SDGs, 12 observer countries, more than 50 specialized agencies and regional and international originations, and over 40 civil society organisations, academia and the private sector.

4. The meeting was chaired by the two co-chairs on the IAEG-SDGs, Ms. Lisa Grace Bersales of the Philippines and Mr. Enrique Ordaz of Mexico. The meeting agenda was adjusted on both Thursday, March 31 and Friday, April 1 to allow IAEG-SDG members more time to meet amongst themselves and determine a proposed work plan for the coming year.

5. All documents of the meeting, including all presentations and statements, are available on the website of the 3rd meeting of the IAEG-SDGs

(<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-03>) and should be consulted for more detailed information.

II. Work plan and next steps

6. The IAEG-SDGs agreed on the following work plan for the next six months that details the work the IAEG-SDGs plans to complete prior to their 4th meeting in the fall of 2016.

Work plan and next steps:

1. Finalising tier system:
 - IAEG-SDGs will review the current proposal of tier system and come back with comments and suggestions by 25 April on Tiers I and II
 - Secretariat will request agencies to provide the exact tools and reporting mechanisms from countries and the exact reference to agreements and the international standards and agencies will provide responses by 2 May
 - The Tier I and II with the additional information will go back to the IAEG-SDGs
 - IAEG-SDGs will review the revised proposals with additional information on Tier III indicators and will submit their comments by 31 May
 - IAEG-SDGs will finalise the initial tier system by 29 July
2. Creation of
 - a. subgroup of IAEG-SDGs (data disaggregation) (15 April)
 - b. 3 working groups under the auspices of the IAEG-SDGs (SDMX, Geospatial information, and interlinkages) (15 April)
3. The 3 working groups will be open to other countries, international organisations and stakeholders by invitation based on level of expertise and area of work
4. Once the process of adoption of the global indicator framework by ECOSOC and the General Assembly is completed, IAEG-SDGs will take into account the specific proposals for refinement based on Statistical Commission decision 1 (e)
5. Develop a plan for reviews of the indicator framework to present to the 48th session of the Statistical Commission
6. Secretariat will request international agencies to submit detailed plans for developing Tier III indicators (29 July)
7. Review and finalise plans proposed by international agencies to develop methodologies for indicators in tier III (15 September)

8. Secretariat will request IAEG-SDGs members to provide scenarios on data flows from national to international level (30 April)
9. 4th meeting of IAEG-SDGs will be held in the fall of 2016.

III. Establishment of a tier system for the implementation of global SDG indicators

7. Agenda item 4, on the establishment of a tier system, was introduced by the Secretariat who provided an overview of the *Provisional Proposed Tier System* document, which was the main topic of discussion under this agenda item. The Secretariat outlined the meaning of the three proposed tiers, how indicators were placed into each of these three tiers, and the proposed next steps for indicators in each of the three tiers.

8. After this initial introduction, the focus of the agenda item shifted to those indicators provisionally classified as Tier III. During this part of the agenda (which lasted for 1.5 days of the meeting), agencies were invited to make short presentations on indicators classified as Tier III that highlighted: (1) why the indicator was in that category; (2) the work that is currently being undertaken or needs to be undertaken in order to establish an agreed methodology for the indicator; and (3) the partners being involved in this work.

9. These short presentations were followed by discussions on the way forward. IAEG-SDG members asked questions and expressed opinions regarding the work plans for these indicators and agencies offered clarification. Based on the discussions that took place on the Tier III indicators during both the open session of the meeting and during the discussions among the IAEG-SDGs members in the closed sessions, the IAEG-SDGs agreed on a work plan (included in Section II of this report) to be undertaken in the coming months in order to finalize the tier system and to review and approve the work plans for indicators categorized as Tier III.

IV. Metadata compilation for global SDG indicators

10. Agenda item 8, on the metadata compilation for global SDG indicators, was introduced by the Secretariat, who proposed a template for the compilation of metadata at global level for the agreed SDG indicators. This proposed template, available from the website of the third meeting of the IAEG-SDGs, will be used by agencies responsible for the compilation of global SDG indicators to provide inputs to the SDG indicator metadata database.

11. There were several comments made by IAEG-SDG members, other countries, and agencies regarding the proposed template for the metadata compilation. Several countries expressed a desire to participate in providing the content for the metadata used for the global indicators. Agencies clarified that when data are provided by countries they are normally accompanied by metadata and these are taken into account in the preparation of metadata at global level for the SDG indicators.

V. Development of global reporting mechanisms and data flows on SDG indicators from the national to the global level

12. Agenda item 9, on the development of global reporting mechanisms, was introduced by the Secretariat, who provided a presentation on possible data flows for information used in the calculation of global indicators. The presentation highlighted the role that National Statistical Systems will play in global reporting and identified some of the different ways data are reported from the national level to the global level. As national data will form the basis for global indicators, identifying these flows is paramount in order to ensure effective global reporting mechanisms and reduce the already heavy burden of reporting on countries.

13. During the discussion on this agenda item, several countries expressed concern with the burden of reporting 230 indicators to different international agencies and expressed frustration with the lack of coordination across the international statistical system with the same information being requested several times by multiple organisations. A few countries also raised the possibility of submitting data directly to UNSD, which would then made data available to the agencies, while other countries talked about developing their own data platforms from which agencies could pull the data directly.

14. Many agencies expressed interest in simplifying the reporting mechanism and easing the reporting burden for national statistical systems and agree that work should be done to simplify this process. UNSD clarified that mandates for international organisations are already well established, including for the methodological developments related to the indicator and for providing the necessary assistance to countries. UNSD will remain the custodian of the global database.

VI. Establishment of baselines for tracking global trends in SDG indicators

15. Agenda item 10, on the establishment of baselines, was introduced by the Secretariat with a short presentation on how to establish baselines and the specific references made to baselines for the global SDG indicators in the 2030 Agenda outcome document. While some participants argued that the baseline year should be 2015, other commented that for practical reasons, data should refer to previous years as well. Some also argued that the same baseline year should be used for all indicators in order to avoid the potentially political issue of selecting particular baseline years for certain indicators. Further discussion and work on the establishment of baselines will take place over the coming months.

VII. Sub-groups of the IAEG-SDGs on data disaggregation and other issues

16. The Co-chairs of the IAEG-SDGs introduced agenda item 12 on the creation of sub-groups and working groups of the IAEG-SDGs. The Co-chairs announced the creation of one sub-group of the IAEG-SDGs on data disaggregation based on decision point 1 (n) of the 47th Statistical Commission and three working groups under the auspices of the IAEG-SDGs that will work on the following topics: Geo-spatial information, SDMX and interlinkages.

17. The Co-chairs announced that the sub-group on data disaggregation would be a group comprised of only IAEG-SDGs members while the other three working groups would be open to other participants (from other countries, international and regional agencies and civil society organisations, the private sector and academia) by invitation from the respective groups. The Co-chairs commented that the terms of reference of the four groups are still being discussed by the IAEG-SDGs and that the finalised terms of reference of the group would be shared by April 15, as detailed in the *Work plan and next steps*.

VIII. Establishment of procedures for the review of indicators, including approval mechanism of needed revisions

18. The Secretariat introduced agenda item 13, on the establishment of procedures for the review of indicators and the approval mechanism of needed revisions. The presentation made by the Secretariat referred to two related areas: the first was “taking into account the specific proposals for refinements of indicators made by Member States” during the 47th Statistical Commission (Decision point 1 (e)), while the second concerned developing a work plan for the regular reviews of the indicator framework.

19. The presentation made by the Secretariat highlighted the decisions reached by the IAEG-SDGs members during their closed sessions. Regarding the first refinement of indicators, the IAEG-SDGs members agreed to address the decision by the Statistical Commission to consider the specific proposals for refinement of indicators mentioned by Member States during the 47th Session, in addition to possibly reviewing those indicators that are determined to not completely cover the full scope of the target. This initial review would also potentially cover any editorial changes to the indicators that are needed. This work will not commence until after the indicator framework is adopted (and possibly a mandate for refinements/revisions is given) by ECOSOC and the General Assembly.

20. Regarding the work plan for the review of the indicator framework, the IAEG-SDGs agreed to provisionally propose two of these reviews during the 2030 Agenda, the first would occur in 2020 and the second in 2025 and that these reviews would focus on four specific groups of indicators: (1) indicators that are not aligned with the target, that do not fully reflect the target, or that go beyond the scope of the target; (2) indicators included in the global indicator framework that are not sufficiently measureable or specific; (3) indicators for which methodological development or data collection efforts have encountered significant difficulties; and (4) indicators where new tools and/or methodologies have become available.

The IAEG-SDGs will prepare a work plan and proposal for these reviews and its final proposal will be presented at the 48th session of the Statistical Commission in 2017.

21. The discussion around this topic focused mainly on the specific indicators that would fall under the initial revision to be completed by the IAEG-SDGs prior to the 48th Statistical Commission. Many participants requested a list of these indicators and the Secretariat stated that it would examine the statements made at the commission and compile a list of specific mentions of indicators.

IX. Thematic, regional and sub-regional indicators for the SDGs

22. Agenda item 14, on thematic, regional and sub-regional indicators, included presentations from several countries and organisations regarding their efforts to develop indicator sets for these different levels of monitoring. The presentations included a presentation by the Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean on the development of indicators for regional monitoring in Latin America, Jamaica on developing an indicator set for monitoring the sub-region of the Caribbean, Cabo Verde on the work of the Praia Group on the development of thematic indicators on governance, the World Health Organisation on developing thematic indicators on health, Mexico on the work of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics on the development of the thematic indicators on gender, and the International Development Law Organization on thematic indicators around the rule of law.

X. Statements by Civil Society Organisations, Academia and the Private Sector

23. Continuing with the collaboration with civil society organisations, academia and the private sector that the IAEG-SDGs has maintained since its first meeting in June 2015, these organisations were invited to provide statements on the various agenda items throughout the meeting. These statements highlighted, among other things, certain indicators which these stakeholders feel should be reviewed and revised, the interest of stakeholders in participating in several of the working groups that are to be created by the IAEG-SDGs, expressions of interest in continuing the close cooperation between the IAEG-SDGs and these stakeholder organisations during the coming work, and a request by these organisations that the IAEG-

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