

**Report of the Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals:
Meeting to identify Asia-Pacific regional and sub-regional priorities
21-23 September 2015
Bangkok, Thailand**

I. Introduction

1. The regional consultation “Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals: Meeting to identify Asia-Pacific regional and sub-regional priorities” was held on 21-23 September 2015 at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand.
2. The objectives of the regional consultation were three-fold:
 - a. To clarify the global IAEG-SDGs process to member States;
 - b. To agree on methods for providing future feedback to the IAEG-SDGs members from non-member countries;
 - c. To facilitate exchange among ESCAP member States on their priority issues for the global SDG monitoring framework.
3. The meeting was organized by ESCAP Statistics Division, henceforth the secretariat, upon request from several Asia-Pacific representatives of the Interagency Expert Group for the Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). The regional representatives¹ expressed that they needed opportunities for consulting on the global monitoring framework of the SDGs and the proposed indicators with other countries of their respective subregions. Against this backdrop, the concept and the programme of the meeting were developed by the secretariat in consultation with the regional members of the IAEG-SDGs and under the overall guidance of the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics. The present report will be brought to the Bureau for their further guidance on any follow-up actions in particular regarding the organization of future consultations and the use of existing regional mechanisms in addressing SDG monitoring issues raised by the participants.
4. The three-day meeting was attended by leaders and senior managers of 27 Asian and Pacific national statistical systems, as well as representatives from a number of subregional and international organizations. All meeting documents including the Concept Note, the Annotated Programme, the List of Participants and a summary of the

¹ The regional representatives of the IAEG-SDGs and the country groupings are: Ms Yunhong Ba (China) for Eastern Asia, Ms Kanykey Orozbaeva (Kyrgyzstan) for Central Asia, Mr Sefuiva Reupena Muagututia (Samoa) and Mr Serevi Baledrokadroka (Fiji) for Oceania, Ms Lisa G. Bersales (Philippines) for South-Eastern Asia, and Mr Krishna Kumar (India) for Southern Asia.

feedback given by the meeting participants on the organization and the content of the meeting are available on the meeting website:

<http://www.unescap.org/events/monitoring-sustainable-development-goals-meeting-identify-asia-pacific-regional-and-sub>

5. The meeting was chaired by Ms Aishath Shahuda, Chief Statistician of the Maldives and Chair of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.

II. Main outcomes of the meeting

6. The following is a summary of the main outcomes emanating from the discussions during the meeting.

A. Regional support for broadening stakeholders' engagement in for monitoring SDGs

7. The meeting agreed on the need to advocate for the 2030 Agenda and related monitoring framework among policy makers at the national level. The endorsement of the global monitoring framework and related indicators at the highest level of the national government is essential to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
8. Participants emphasized that localizing the SDGs in government planning and programmes is critical to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, countries are encouraged to develop their own methods for adopting national SDG indicators in alignment with existing national policy monitoring frameworks. In particular, the meeting stressed that the United Nations agencies and other development partners have an important role to play in promoting and supporting the integration of the sustainable development agenda into national development plans.
9. Beyond the national implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda, participants agreed that effective advocacy for SDGs in the national context can also help ensure the engagement of key policy departments in implementing the global monitoring framework, which is particularly pertinent as in most cases policymakers, and not necessarily national statistical systems, are the drivers of indicator selection.
10. In this connection, the meeting emphasized the important role advocacy and awareness raising by development partners among national decision makers regarding the 2030 Agenda, including the upcoming global monitoring framework and list of indicators. Planning ministries were emphasized as a particularly important target ministry for such awareness raising and advocacy efforts on the SDGs and on the need to strengthen national statistical systems. It was suggested that such work can start by sponsoring national workshops on a "primer" of SDGs that target key relevant government agencies, civil society organizations, academia and other stakeholders.
11. The meeting recommended that the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development should have the important function of providing a regional platform for regular exchanges between sustainable development data producers and users, including national statistical systems, producers of such non-traditional data as the big data, academia, the scientific community, policy making bodies such as planning ministries, and civil society

organizations. It is hence recommended that a part of the annual APFSD sessions be designed as a user-producer forum in consultation with the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.

B. Statistical capacity building for monitoring the sustainable development agenda

12. The meeting emphasized the urgent need of strengthening national statistical capacity in support of 2030 Agenda implementation and providing source data for global reporting of progress in achieving the SDGs. National statistical systems, including those from more developed countries, at present do not have the capacity to collect and produce data for a large number of the proposed indicators for global monitoring.
13. Participants highlighted a number of priorities where national actors and development partners can target for statistical capacity development. These include the establishment of a legal framework for producing good quality statistics which allows for the use of traditional and non-traditional data sources; effective programmes to improve the leadership skills of Chief Statisticians and senior management teams in national statistical systems; strengthening of regional and national training institutions to meet the existing and emerging demands for building data skills and competencies; and the ability of national statistical systems to analyze and interpret the indicators so as to move from producing underlying data for SDG indicators to the monitoring of SDGs. The meeting suggested that peer-to-peer support opportunities among countries for all of the above should be explored.
14. The meeting emphasized the importance of harmonized support by development partners to national statistical systems and stressed the role, particularly of the national statistical offices, in priority setting and coordinating the related support. Effective in-country coordination among national statistical offices, line ministries and the planning bodies was highlighted as the basis for this.
15. The meeting requested that international agencies with long-standing mandates for statistics development collaborate to provide coordinated support to countries in addressing the above and other areas of capacity needs, not least by broadening their data collection and capacity building programmes.
16. The meeting recommended that international organizations and other development partners make dedicated efforts to improve knowledge management to support SDG monitoring at national and global levels. This would include developing a manual for SDG indicators and a roadmap for monitoring SDGs, disseminating related metadata on SDG indicators including making materials available also in languages other than English. Participants agreed that guidelines on interpreting the indicators to assess whether a given target is met, should be incorporated in these materials.
17. The meeting recommended that development partners should strengthen their efforts to support the integration of national strategies for the development of statistics into broader national development plans. In addition to increasing coherence and efficiency, such integration would facilitate efforts by statistical institutions to secure related resources

for statistics production for SDG progress monitoring. Furthermore, the meeting emphasized that capacity building support for monitoring SDGs should be aligned with existing regional and subregional frameworks, e.g. the work of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics and the Ten Year Pacific Strategy on Statistics (TYPSS), in order to have enduring results.

C. Sub-regional mechanisms and support for sustainable development agenda

18. The meeting emphasized that subregional intergovernmental mechanisms such as the ASEAN Community Statistical System have a critical role to play in supporting the implementation of the SDGs. Endorsement by the governing bodies of such mechanisms of the 2030 sustainable development agenda and related monitoring frameworks will lend policy support and impetus to the efforts of national statistical systems.
19. The meeting recognized that in the Pacific, member States have coordinated through the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in order to ensure that existing regional frameworks support the sustainable development agenda and its monitoring and vice versa. These mechanisms should be used to for further consultation regarding member States' perspectives and priorities on the global monitoring framework and the global indicators list, as well as the upcoming implementation of monitoring the SDGs. The meeting recommended that development partners working in the Pacific should engage with these mechanisms.
20. The meeting also acknowledged that ESCAP's subregional offices are ready to support implementation and monitoring of the sustainable development agenda in their corresponding member States.

D. Next steps for the IAEG-SDGs and regional consultations

21. Participants were informed that the IAEG-SDGs would continue to work in several key areas after the indicator list is confirmed. These include the provision of technical assistance for the implementation of SDG monitoring; promotion of good practices and innovations, including in the area of national capacity building and; global reporting of progress in achieving the SDGs. The IAEG-SDGs is expected to make recommendations to the UN Statistical Commission, the Committee on the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the High Level Group on SDGs² and review the work of UN Statistics Division which serves as the secretariat to the Group.
22. The meeting recommended that the regional members of the IAEG-SDGs continuously consult and involve the countries that they represent on the implementation of the global monitoring framework and ensure that regional priorities and perspectives are reflected in global processes.
23. The meeting agreed that regular regional consultations would support SDG monitoring and review. Such regular consultations should have a component on capacity building

² The members of HLG-SDGs from Asia-Pacific are Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan and Vanuatu.

and feature methodological and technical discussions specific to indicators.³ It was suggested that regional consultations include data producer-user forums as well.

24. The meeting suggested that future regional consultations could consider the following issues through such regional forums as APFSD and ESCAP Committee on Statistics as well as through subregional mechanisms:

- Global monitoring and reporting requirements of national statistical systems;
- Selection and prioritization of indicators for regional and subregional monitoring;
- Coordination among international agencies for collection of national data as well as for provision of capacity building support to national statistical systems.

E. Immediate follow-up actions on the proposed indicator list for global monitoring

25. The meeting emphasized that, in the review of the proposed global indicators of SDGs, countries should consider links between global monitoring and support for capacity building.

26. The meeting encouraged regional members of the IAEG-SDGs to enable all member countries of their sub-regions to review the proposed indicator list and voice their views.

27. Given the extremely tight timeline for the submission of the list of proposed indicators to the forty-seventh session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, countries agreed that the review of the proposed indicators would have to be light and rapid.

28. It was recommended that the latest list of proposed SDG indicators, i.e. "version 25 September" be used for any reviews to be undertaken in the time leading up to the second meeting of the global IAEG-SDGs on 26-28 October. All IAEG-SDGs members from Asia and the Pacific agreed to forward the revised list of proposed indicators to their respective subregions immediately upon receipt from UNSD.

29. Each of the sub-regions planned the rapid review process as the follows:

- For *Central Asia* the initial communications to all countries would be sent out by the IAEG-SDGs representative summarizing the meeting discussions and the review process. Given the tight timeline for the review of SDG indicators, a possibility was raised as to focus on the SDGs of subregional relevance and priority and share the indicators to be reviewed according to countries' demonstrated experience.
- *Eastern Asian* countries have already made significant progress in conducting national reviews of the proposed indicators and the IAEG-SDGs representative would collect any additional comments that the countries would like to provide before the second meeting.

³ These points were further echoed in the feedback provided by the meeting participants, available at the meeting website.

- *Oceania* planned to first map the proposed indicators against SPC's list of headline indicators for the Pacific. Countries were asked to submit their comments by 8 October to enable their consolidation by 15 October. Samoa requested a supporting letter from ESCAP to create awareness of the process in the government.
- *Southeast Asia* agreed not to have structured consultations prior to the second meeting of the global IAEG-SDGs. However, countries were encouraged to send their comments to the proposed indicators directly to the IAEG-SDGs representative.
- Countries from *Southern Asia* at the meeting agreed to have a rapid review of the revised list of proposed indicators.

30. In terms of longer-term support to the work of the IAEG-SDGs at the subregional level:

- Central Asia proposed to establish a subregional multi-stakeholder working group at least for the first years of the SDG monitoring process. The IAEG-SDGs member would formulate a request to ESCAP and other relevant organizations for supporting the establishment and functioning of such a working group.
- Eastern Asia's representative of the IAEG-SDGs requested ESCAP to assist with establishing communication with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea so as to enable the latter in participating in consultations regarding the work of the Group.
