Follow-up and Review

International Statistical Community Activities in Support of the SDGs

By Stefan Schweinfest

When world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the fall of 2015, they set in motion a worldwide effort on the part of government leaders, civil society, businesses, and academia to implement a plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity. These highly ambitious goals were laid out in the form of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The task of follow-up and review of the progress towards achieving the goals and targets has been given to the international statistical community. Specifically, the Agenda mandated the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to develop a global indicator framework addressing all targets of the Agenda that embodies the ambitions established by member states. Without a doubt the international statistical community has gone above and beyond in its work to deliver on that task.

Indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The IAEG-SDGs has worked intensively since 2015 on the development of the global indicator framework through an open and transparent process involving all stakeholders. The Statistical Commission, a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), at its 48th session in March 2017, adopted a resolution on data and statistics for the 2030 Agenda, which contains the global indicator framework. Subsequently, the Council (on June 7, 2017) and the General Assembly (on July 6, 2017) adopted the Statistical Commission's resolution, which completed the last piece in the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The global indicator framework contains 232 indicators that address each of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. The development of a robust and high-quality indicator framework is a technical process that will need to continue over time. The global indicators will be refined yearly and comprehensively reviewed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2020 and 2025. The IAEG-SDGs continues to work in an open, inclusive, and transparent manner to ensure that indicators are fully implemented so that all goals and targets are appropriately reviewed and no individual or group is left behind.

The global indicator framework provides a sound basis for the development and implementation of national indicator frameworks. National ownership remains key to achieving sustainable development. National indicator frameworks will take into account different national realities, capacities, and levels of development, and will respect the policy space and priorities of the country.

> The international statistical community is engaged in a number of activities to support the Sustainable Development Goals and the associated targets. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Indicators has developed a global indicator framework to help monitor progress in the ongoing efforts to make the ambitious agenda a global reality, in line with the wishes of all member states.

Statistical capacity building

The full implementation of the indicator framework presents an enormous challenge for all countries. Significant efforts among all actors are needed to strengthen national statistical capacities and effective collaboration. In response to this, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB), a group that was established at the 46th session of the Statistical

Commission in 2015, has been tasked with providing strategic leadership for the SDG implementation process as it concerns statistical monitoring and reporting. The group developed the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, which was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission at its 48th session in March 2017.

The action plan provides a roadmap for the modernization and strengthening of statistical systems and a framework for the design and implementation of country-led statistical capacity-building activities necessary to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It identifies key actions along six strategic areas. This month, the HLG-PCCB will hold its ninth meeting from November 7 to 9, 2017, in Ramallah, Palestine. The meeting will focus on the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan and a strategy for capacity building, as well as review the organization and planning for the second UN World Data Forum to be hosted by the United Arab Emirates in 2018.

The UN World Data Forum

As part of the international statistical efforts for the implementation of the SDGs, under the leadership of the HLG-PCCB, a United Nations World Data Forum is organized every two years. The first United Nations World Data Forum took place in Cape Town, South Africa, on January 15 to 18, 2017. With more than 1,400 participants from over 100 countries from national statistical offices, international organizations, civil society groups, private sector, and academia, as well as political leaders and sustainable-development advocates, the event was a unique opportunity for major producers and users of data and statistics to collaborate in launching new initiatives and innovative solutions that will deliver better data on all aspects of sustainable development.

The forum concluded with the launch of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for better data to improve people's lives, and the presentation of new ideas and solutions to boost the collaboration, resources, and policies needed to put the plan into action. A number of innovative data initiatives and tools were announced. The second UN World Data Forum will be hosted by the United Arab Emirates in Dubai between October 22 and 24, 2018.

The way forward

A key principle of the Agenda is ensuring that no individual or group will be left behind, and this will require increased data and capacity. Due to the unprecedented scope and significance of the 2030 Agenda, the international statistical community – including statisticians and experts from national statistical offices, various parts of national statistical systems, international agencies, and other organizations from around the world – will work together intensively over the next 13 years to meet the data requirements to effectively monitor and review progress on the 2030 Agenda.

Stefan Schweinfest was appointed director of the Statistics Division (UNSD/DESA) in 2014. Under his leadership, the Division compiles and disseminates global statistical information, develops standards and norms for statistical activities, including the integration of geospatial, statistical, and other information, and supports countries' efforts to strengthen their national statistical and geospatial systems. UNSD services the Statistical Commission and its Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), which developed the global indicator framework to monitor progress towards the SDGs.