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Feature Articles

“We need sustainable statistics to support sustainable development”

For almost as long as the UN has existed, development data has been collected, generating a crucial asset for the international community. Behind this important effort is UN DESA’s Statistics Division, led by Stefan Schweinfest. In DESA News, he shares what it takes to measure an ever changing world and to prepare for development beyond 2015.



Watch the interview on YouTube: <http://bit.ly/1l6NzW>

“Statistics is one of those quiet areas where the United Nations is actually working very, very well,” says Stefan Schweinfest, as he speaks with DESA News. “We have a lot to be proud of. I think we

have collected billions and billions of development data here [...] over the last 67-68 years, and this is a real treasure,” he adds.

With 24 years of experience working with statistics for the UN, Mr. Schweinfest has covered many different areas including national and environmental accounting, statistical capacity building programmes and indicator frameworks. Since 2002, he has served as the main coordinator of the Statistical Commission and he has also been one of the leading forces in the establishment of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management. On 1 April 2013, Stefan Schweinfest was appointed Acting Director of UN DESA’s Statistics Division.

Tracking progress of Millennium Development Goals

For the past 13 years, one of the key activities of the division has been to monitor the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in 2000, and to prepare the statistical annex for the annual MDG report of the Secretary-General.

“The MDGs have been good for statistics. They have highlighted the need of solid and good information for policy and decision-making,” says Stefan Schweinfest. He also talks warmly about the cooperation with the inter-agency expert group, that brings together “the best statisticians [...] and the best statistics of the entire UN System”, and how their collaborative efforts result in the annual MDG report.

“We definitely [...] have much more information today and better information today than we had 15 years ago or 13 years ago. But we should also bear in mind that there are still about 1/3 of the countries that have difficulties producing about half of

the indicators,” Mr. Schweinfest adds, underlining that there is still extensive work to be done.

Statisticians need to be involved from start

When speaking about the new post-2015 development agenda that is being developed, Stefan Schweinfest underscores the need to have statisticians onboard from the start. “One of the lessons learned from the last round was that statisticians need to be involved in the process from the very beginning,” he says.

Mr. Schweinfest points to the Friends of the Chair Group, which the Statistical Commission created this year and which brings together about 20 very dedicated countries and their chief statisticians. The Statistics Division is working closely with them to develop broader measures of progress needed in the context of the sustainable development agenda and to also ensure that a solid measuring framework is part of the new development agenda.

“We are not taking pictures, we are making a movie”

Stefan Schweinfest also talks about the request for a data revolution, which was put forward in the report released earlier this year by the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, entitled “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development”.

“I am very pleased with that type of attention given to my professional area and I understand this to mean that we will have to make a massive concerted effort to help countries to strengthen national statistical systems,” he says. His team is now working to enhance partnerships both within and outside the UN System in order to be able to support countries around the world. A new cooperation agreement on statistics has been signed recently with the World Bank, the International Development Banks and the IMF.

“In statistics [...] there are no short cuts, there are no quick fixes,” says Mr. Schweinfest. “What we are trying to measure is development and so we have to have not only one measurement at one point in time, but we will have to have measurements at several points in times, annually, or every three to five years over the next 15 years.”

“I am always saying, we are not taking pictures, we are actually making a movie, so when we talk about sustainable development, we also need sustainable statistics to support sustainable development.”

Powerful analytical tools created

“Being innovative is one of the fundamental challenges of our profession because we are measuring the world and the world around us is changing continuously in so many areas,” says Stefan Schweinfest, as he describes some of the new pioneering work of his division.

One example is the launch of a new initiative on global geospatial information management, bringing together the geospatial community with statisticians. “We believe that this marriage [...] between geospatial information and statistical information will create very powerful analytical tools,” explains Mr. Schweinfest.

Environmental economic accounting is another area developed by the division and the expert team of the Statistics Division is now working with countries and regions around the world to implement this new system. What this offers is the possibility of jointly analyzing the environment and the economy and their interaction.

Gender statistics and big data

Mr. Schweinfest also discusses their global gender statistics programme, where they have been working on indicators on violence against women and where they have also launched a new project together with UN Women, called Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE).

Yet another area is big data, which is the result of the IT development and its generation of large quantities of data elements. Mr. Schweinfest explains that some of these data may be useful for statistical and monitoring purposes, while others are not. “But we as statisticians have to look at this new big reservoir of information,” he says.

Ensuring measuring system for future development

As the new year approaches, Mr. Schweinfest shares some of the main activities which will take place in 2014. “Clearly the support of the discussions on the new development agenda will be our focus in 2014 and 2015 to ensure that the sustainable development agenda is supported by an adequate and robust measurement system.”

The Statistical Commission is also scheduled to convene again in March, bringing together a large number of countries and statisticians from across the world. On global geospatial information management an inter-governmental meeting as well as a high-level forum in China will also be organized in August and October respectively.

And in-between these high-level events, Mr. Schweinfest and his colleagues are engaged in organizing and hosting a wide range of workshops and capacity-building seminars around the globe with fellow statisticians participating. When describing the worldwide collaboration, Stefan Schweinfest refers to his peers as his “statistical family”, praising their shared value system and sense of professionalism.

“Statistics may not sound like the most sexy area to work in. Actually, when I mention in a dinner conversation, that I am a

statistician, that's usually the end of the dinner conversation," he says with a smile.

But without the collection and analysis of data, there would be no solid foundation to build decisions upon and take action from, benefiting future development. "I would say statistics is as important an element of a national infrastructure as are roads or bridges," concludes Stefan Schweinfest.

For more information:

UN DESA's Statistics Division
The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013
Statistics and indicators for the post-2015 development era
United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management
"A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development"

Opening the door for people of all abilities

The global community took a giant step forward during the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development in September to break down barriers for the more than 1 billion persons living with some form of disability. With a historic outcome document adopted, this year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, aims to kick-off an action-filled course towards an inclusive society, embracing all human beings.



Watch the interview on YouTube: <http://bit.ly/1fO1Mxo>

About 15 per cent of the global population live with some form of disability, making up the largest and most disadvantaged minority in the world. 80 per cent are of working age and the majority are from developing countries. Many of them live in poverty, face discrimination and are denied opportunities to participate in development.

"All of us suffer when communities are divided; just as all of us benefit when communities are united," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said as he addressed some 800 representatives that had gathered at UN Headquarters in New York for the high-level event in September. "We must remove barriers to equality of opportunity so that all people can be free from poverty and discrimination," he added.

In addition to making physical environments, transportation and information accessible to everyone, the challenges at hand also involve removing barriers in attitudes, that fuel stigma and discrimination. Instead, focus needs to be shifted towards every person's ability. This was also something that Daniela Bas, Director of UN DESA's Division for Social Policy and Development, underscored as she spoke in conjunction with this high-level event.

Tools for action and change

In order to realize an inclusive society where everyone's rights are protected and equal opportunities are ensured, the United Nations is working side by side with governments and civil society. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is both a human right and social development instrument available to make a difference. Since its entry into force in 2008, 138 countries have ratified or acceded to the Convention, and 158 have signed it.

Another important tool for transformation became available following the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development in September when a landmark document was adopted. Entitled "The way forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond," this document underscores the need for "urgent action" towards the adoption and implementation of more ambitious disability-inclusive development strategies.

"To turn these commitments into reality on the ground, stakeholders must implement more ambitious disability-inclusive national development strategies and efforts," said UN DESA's Under-Secretary-General Wu Hongbo as he addressed the meeting. "DESA stands ready to provide cooperation and partnership to Members States and other stakeholders in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of inclusive and sustainable development policies and programmes, towards 2015 and beyond," Mr. Wu added.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities: Celebrations and new UN Accessibility Centre

Every year on 3 December, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is commemorated worldwide to promote awareness and mobilize support on critical issues to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in society and development.

Under the theme “Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all,” various activities will take place to underscore the importance of accessibility and inclusion in the contexts of development. With only two months passed since the high-level event, the celebrations this year offer an ideal platform to transfer the outcome document into actions and to mobilise support to national efforts.

The program at UN headquarters in New York will feature “Messages of Inclusion” to be delivered by Member States, UN system and civil society, highlighting how the outcome document can be translated into action. The event will also present a UN Enable Theatre performance by the Broadway Group “Breaking through Barriers,” several panel discussions on emerging issues in the disability-development nexus, and the screening of the documentary “Gold: You can do more than you think”, telling the story of three Paralympic athletes from Kenya, Germany and Australia, who took part in the 2012 London Paralympic Games.

In addition to the commemoration at UN Headquarters, people from across the world are encouraged to take part in a Thunderclap, lending their social media channels to show support for this international day and what it stands for (follow this [link](#) to sign up).

The United Nations Foundation and GivingTuesday.org will also join the celebrations to promote volunteerism by taking concrete steps to create enabling environments within communities and across the world for persons with disabilities. Also, on 4 December, the Secretary-General will inaugurate the new UN Accessibility Center, created to make the United Nations more accessible and to facilitate the full participation of persons with disabilities in the work of the organization.

Embracing the abilities of all people

Recent events provide additional resources to facilitate change towards a society that includes persons with all kinds of abilities and disabilities. This was also something that a young speaker from last year’s celebration expressed a wish for. Addressing the event on 3 December 2012, 10-year-old Emmanuel Elisha Ford, blind since birth, urged, “I make an earnest plea and call upon all of you to look at people with disabilities as differently-abled.” Determined to achieve his dream of becoming a meteorologist one day, Emmanuel also encouraged nations across the world to make the most of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

And the international community is moving forward in this direction. The new landmark outcome document sets the vision beyond the Millennium Development Goals target date and underscores the need for disability-inclusive development strategies in the post-2015 setting. Taking aim at breaking down barriers and opening up doors, so that every human being can live their life to the fullest potential.

This is the vision of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who in his concluding remarks to the high-level meeting said, “Let us work together so everyone, everywhere has the chance to live their dreams and use the gifts that they have been given. Let us advance disability-inclusive development, inspire change on the ground and ensure a life of dignity for all.”

For more information:

[International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Show support of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities via [Thunderclap](#)

[United Nations Enable website](#)

[High-Level Meeting on Disabilities and Development, 23 September 2013](#)

[Video interviews with civil society representatives from High-Level Meeting on Disabilities and Development, 23 September 2013](#)

Securing a solid foundation for future development



In preparation for the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, UN DESA is involved in many different initiatives moving the processes forward. Recent and upcoming publications released by the department and its partners, also play an important role in securing a solid point of departure for future development.

The General Assembly’s Open-Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals continues its work drafting a set of global objectives that will help set the world on a more

sustainable path. Organized by UN DESA's Division for Sustainable Development, the OWG convened its fifth session on 25-27 November, taking aim at topics including sustained and inclusive economic growth, macroeconomic policy questions, infrastructure development and industrialization.

On the side-lines of this event, UN DESA's Division for Development Policy and Analysis arranged two special briefings to highlight recent and new publications that provide the global community with research, analysis and recommendations that will help lay a solid foundation for the post-2015 development agenda.

Briefing highlights book on alternative development strategies

"The CDP [United Nations Committee for Development Policy] has taken upon itself the task to examine and draw lessons from past experiences so that we can formulate more effective, comprehensive approaches in identifying durable and equitable solutions to the development challenges the world confronts today," said Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, UN DESA's Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, on 25 November, when the new book "Alternative Development Strategies for the Post-2105 Era", was launched.

Authored by independent development experts brought together by ECOSOC's independent advisory body CDP, and edited by José Antonio Alonso, Giovanni Andrea Cornia and Rob Vos, this book argues that new policy approaches are needed to address severe global development challenges and to avoid the potentially adverse consequences to livelihoods that are likely to result from existing strategies.

"No one size fits all, no silver bullets"

The flaws in existing economic policymaking systems became evident in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, which coincided with several other crises, including skyrocketing and highly volatile world food and energy prices and ongoing climate change challenges.

In her address, Ms. Akhtar noted that the book provides some important answers to current challenges. "We need to learn from successful national experiences. There is no one size fits all, no silver bullets. However, there are some common elements among those successful policies which provide important lessons for us in formulating an alternative development strategy," she said.

Giving praise to its rich analysis, Ms. Akhtar also highlighted how the "book stresses that a more cooperative, inclusive and effective international governance system needs to be designed based on the principle of 'common-but-differentiated responsibilities'" and how the post-2015 development era "should take into account the interdependence among global goals and ensure coherence between these goals and those established at the local, national and regional levels."

Assessing options for statistics and indicators

The report "Statistics and indicators for the post-2015 development agenda", released earlier in the summer by the UN System Task Team's Working Group on Monitoring and Indicators, was presented during a side event on 26 November. Stefan Schweinfest, Acting Director of UN DESA's Statistics Division, joined forces with the lead author of the report Robert Johnston, to share some of its key findings and recommendations.

The report assesses options for statistics and indicators in a post-2015 setting and provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the MDG indicators. It also outlines data innovations in new critical areas such as inequalities, governance, sustainability and population.

It considers national capacities for statistics and makes some key suggestions on how to further foster these when developing a monitoring framework for the post-2015 agenda. The intention is to provide early inputs into the discussion; so that once all goals and thematic areas have been put in place by UN member States, there will be some common ground for the identification of monitoring indicators and data sources.

Gathering knowledge and research findings, these publications provide important inputs as Member States, Major Groups and other stakeholders collaborate in the quest of mapping out the development beyond 2015 and towards the future we want.

For more information:

[Briefing on the new book "Alternative Development Strategies for the Post-2015 Era"](#)

[Briefing on the report "Statistics and indicators for the post-2015 development agenda"](#)

Global Dialogue on Development

Calling for Global Public Service Awards nominations



The United Nations is calling for nominations for the UN Public Service Awards 2014. This is an international contest designed to promote and support innovations in public service delivery worldwide. The award is open to public

organizations of all kinds, including Governments and public-private partnerships that are involved in delivering services to citizens around the globe.

An annual United Nations event, the 2014 Public Service Awards, which will be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea will be bestowed on those public institutions that have distinguished themselves in the following categories: Improving the Delivery of Public Services; Fostering Participation in Policy-making Decisions through Innovative Mechanisms; Promoting Whole-of-Government Approaches in the Information Age and Promoting Gender-Responsive Delivery of Public Services. The award highlights cutting edge innovations and recognizes that democracy and successful governance are built on a competent civil service.

“The United Nations has long recognized the importance of good governance and efficient public administration. Current global consultations on the post-2015 agenda have further underscored their centrality to all development objectives. United Nations Public Service Day encourages countries to celebrate the contribution of public servants to society’s progress,” said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his message for the 2013 United Nations Public Service Day.

The day was established by the Economic and Social Council in 2003 to promote better delivery of services by governments and to encourage excellence in the public service. As Mr. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General of UN DESA, emphasized during the 2013 United Nations Public Service Awards ceremony held in Manama, Bahrain, “With limited resources and mounting challenges facing Governments in the delivery of public services, today’s innovative winners inspire us to work harder to address public service challenges”.

The global event is organized by UN DESA’s Division of Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

While contenders cannot nominate themselves, interested institutions deemed to have designed and implemented innovations in any one of the prize categories can have their name put forward by Governments or civil society organizations. Nominations must be made [online here](#) from 18 September 2013 until 18 December 2013.

For background information about the [UN Public Service Awards and past winners](#). All winning cases of the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) are available as [iPad and iPhone applications](#) It can be downloaded for free and as an [eBook](#).

Ensuring financing for sustainable development



The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing will hold its second session on 2-6 December at UN Headquarters in New York.

At the Rio+20 Conference, UN Member States recognized the need for significant mobilization of resources and the effective use of financing, to support developing countries in their efforts to promote sustainable development. Subsequently, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing was created to look into these and related matters.

Following its first session held at the end of August, time has now come for the Committee’s second session. And as this is a committee of experts, the session will be closed. However, in order to fulfill the mandate from Rio+20 to consult with a variety of stakeholders, an open interactive multi-stakeholder dialogue will take place on Thursday 5 December 2013.

The interactive dialogue will be divided into two parts. From 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. the Co-chairs will brief on the work of the Committee, followed by questions and answers from the floor. From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. a panel composed of four representatives from NGOs, business and industry sectors and other Major Groups engaged in the Rio+20 Conference and the Financing for

Development process will give presentations, followed by an open discussion with the audience.

More information can be found on the [Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#).

Conference puts focus on rural energy access



In collaboration with Sustainable Energy for All, UN-Energy and the Economic Commission for Africa and UN DESA's Division for Sustainable Development, a Global Conference on Rural Energy Access will be organized on 4-6 December

in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focusing on a nexus approach to sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The main objective of the event is to strengthen capacities on policy, technical, and entrepreneurial approaches to rural energy access for eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development in rural communities.

More specifically, the Conference will aim to promote dialogue among practitioners, experts, donors and policy-makers to facilitate closer cooperation on rural energy access. It will seek to assess potential integrated policy options to address rural energy and to identify synergies that can be realized from the links between energy and other development factors including health, education, economic growth, gender, water and food security.

A further objective of the Conference is to encourage a discussion on ways to apply models and practices to allow the scaling up of the use of clean cook stoves and stand-alone renewable energy systems. Participants will aim to identify best practices and lessons learned on sharing international and country-level experiences in rural energy-access development. Furthermore, the Conference is to assist participants in identifying relevant renewable energy products, systems and services for rural communities and support the Rio+20 follow-up process and the post-2015 development agenda.

The Conference will also host a technology exhibition, at which 30 organisations are planning to showcase their equipment, products and services related to rural energy access.

For more information: [Global Conference on Rural Energy Access: A Nexus Approach to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication](#)

Partnerships and means to implement a sustainable future



The sixth session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals will take place on 9-13 December at UN Headquarters in New York.

The first two days will be dedicated to discussing

means of implementation (science and technology, knowledge-sharing and capacity building) and global partnership for achieving sustainable development. Days three and four will be devoted to deliberating the needs of countries in special situations, African countries, Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States, as well as specific challenges facing the middle-income countries. The final day will focus on human rights, the right to development, and global governance.

The issues will be explored through an interactive dialogue which will include keynote speeches and panel discussions. Issues briefs produced by the UN System Technical Support team, as well as the draft programme and further information, can be found on the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (SDKP) (see link below).

Involvement of Major Groups and other Stakeholders in the Open Working Group process has been central from the beginning, and there are a number of ways for them to engage. Representatives from the Major Groups will attend the session as official observers, and the Co-chairs will meet with Major Groups and other Stakeholders from 9 am to 10am each of the five mornings of the session. Input can also be provided via the Thematic Clusters on the SDKP.

For more information:

[Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform \(SDKP\)](#)

Trends and Analysis

Exploring best practices in e-government



The International Workshop on e-Government Best Practices to be hosted by the Jordanian Ministry of ICT and jointly organized by UN DESA and UNESCWA will aim to provide a platform for senior level official from Arab region

and across the world to disseminate best practices and discuss trends, achievement and challenges in implementing e-government initiatives. The event will take place in Amman, Jordan on 3-5 December.

Information and Communication technologies have had a significant impact on modernization of public administration and governance. Government electronic services have been developed not only to simplify government procedures and improve interaction with citizens, but also to create new governance models that would empower citizens and involve them in the decision-making process as well as increase transparency and accountability of governance.

Arab countries have all realized the importance of a well-conceived e-government strategy and have launched national e-government initiatives. They have placed a high priority on the development of e-government programs and mobilized human and financial resources for their implementation. In some Arab countries, the focus of e-government initiatives has shifted from the provision of services through one-stop-shop portals to more advanced concepts such as open data initiatives.

Recognizing the important role of UN DESA in advancing e-government agendas at the global and regional levels and building upon a successful cooperation on the organization of the UN Workshop on “Promoting Governance through Innovation and ICT” during the UNPSA 2013 in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, the ICT Division of the UN Economic Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) requested the cooperation of eGB/DPADM/UN DESA to jointly organize this “International Workshop in Promoting e-Government Best Practices”.

The event will be hosted by the Jordanian Ministry of ICT and organized jointly by UN DESA and UNESCWA. It will take place

on 3-5 December, 2013 at UNESCWA Technology Center in Amman with over 60 participants expected to attend. The International Workshop will explore achievements and challenges faced by Arab countries in designing and implementing e-government best practices as they relate to the role of institutions and leaders, identify leadership capacity building needs and develop partnership for capacity building in the region.

It will run for three days and include 16 working sessions aiming at building capacities of funded and non-funded participants on the mechanisms to design, implement and ensure sustainability of online public service delivery through the exchange of ideas, experiences and best practices amongst and between Arab countries and other regions of the world. The end goal is to improve public service delivery, achieve the increased understanding and technical capacities of decision makers on the improvements in institutional framework needed to increase the level of e-government readiness. It will do so through the facilitation of an active dialogue between UN DESA, UNESCWA, invited experts, high level officials, representatives of international organizations, the business community and other stakeholders.

For more information on e-Government, visit the website of [UN DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management](#).

With a spotlight on the Global Sustainable Development Report



The “Expert Group Meeting for the Global Sustainable Development Report 2013 – Engaging National Assessments” will take place from 12 to 13 December in Beijing. It is co-

sponsored by UN DESA and the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China.

The meeting will open with statements by Under-Secretary-General Wu-Hongbo and the host country's Vice Minister of Science and Technology, among others.

One of the functions of the High Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF), which was inaugurated on 24 September 2013, is to strengthen the science-policy interface. This is to be done, among other things, by bringing together dispersed information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing

assessments, and enhancing evidence-based decision-making at all levels.

The Expert Group Meeting is intended to contribute to the work of the HLPF on the above issues. It will bring together leading scientists and experts involved in preparing national reports or related sustainable development assessments, in order to ensure that their research findings and analytical perspectives will be featured in the Global Sustainable Development Report. The modality of future collaboration among the experts will also be discussed during the meeting.

Further information can be found on the [Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform](#).

Renewing commitment for ECOSOC strengthening



The 2013 ECOSOC Presidential Expert Meeting took place on 15-16 November at the Greentree Foundation in Manhasset, New York. The theme of the event was “The ECOSOC We Want: Renewing commitment, confronting new challenges”. The Meeting was convened by H.E. Néstor Osorio, President of ECOSOC, and organized by UN DESA’s Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination.

The event brought together over 60 participants, including former ECOSOC Presidents, the current ECOSOC Bureau, Permanent Representatives, other representatives from Member States and experts, to discuss the way forward for ECOSOC after the adoption by the General Assembly of resolutions 67/290 on the High-level Political Forum and 68/1 on strengthening ECOSOC.

The opening session was devoted to defining the pressing development challenges to sustainable development in the social, economic and environment areas that would need to address, such as geo-political and geo-economic shifts, climate change, youth, women, the communications revolution, urbanization and migration, science and technology and inequality.

A number of key messages emerged from the four separate working groups:

Furthering engagements with national stakeholders

Discussions underlined that ECOSOC has to play a leading role in choosing relevant and attractive topics to a broad range of

stakeholders, and that could attract participation from country capitals. The Council’s working methods and proceedings should therefore also be opened to include national stakeholders and move away from the current model that limits the participation of private sector, the scientific community, parliamentarians and civil society organizations.

Enhancing the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development

Emphasis was placed on the critical role the newly created integration segment of the Council is to play in bringing better understanding on how daunting challenges can be addressed from all the three dimensions of sustainable development and making concrete recommendations for action. In this connection, the role of all stakeholders, including ECOSOC’s subsidiary bodies should be augmented. The two transition years of 2014-2015 represent an opportunity to gather experience that will be relevant for the post-2015 architecture and implementation.

Strengthening the links between normative and operational activities

There was a broad agreement that the operational activities role of ECOSOC should go beyond its conventional role by enhancing dialogue on issues of system-wide concerns such as the responsiveness of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), national ownership, effective utilization of funds and the functioning of the Resident Coordinator system. Participants stressed that ECOSOC could also provide space for dialogue on overall guidance of operational activities and thus give voice to Member States that may have difficulties effectively influencing discussions at the governing body level, and/or in regional groups.

Enhancing the Council’s monitoring capacity to promote greater accountability

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms for the post-2015 development agenda should be built into the design of the new development framework. They should engage a wide range of stakeholders, especially parliaments, in order to better link global to national accountability. Broad-based participation will also be critical in defining the scope of such accountability – for what and to whom – both at the global and national levels. National reviews should continue to be carried out in the medium and long term to allow sufficient time to measure and monitor implementation.

The way forward

The new institutional architecture for this vision built on the Council, the General Assembly and the high-level political forum, all acting in unison, offers a historical opportunity. It is

imperative to bring to them the relevant policymakers and experts so that their outcomes can become more effective. Working through the transition in 2014-2015, as the transformative development agenda beyond 2015 is finalized, requires moving beyond the process – to action and implementation. Systems can be modified as necessary to ensure that they remain fit and effective.

For more information on the work of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), browse the [Council's website](#).

Centre for Innovation on e-Government Development launched



New e-Government platforms and networks are dramatically changing the decision-making systems, business models and public service delivery mechanisms in both developed and developing countries. All this growing demand for ICT goods and

services in the public and private sectors can potentially leverage the consolidation of improved governance, thus becoming the backbone of sustainable development through efficient public administration. On 26-27 November, the E-xperience Conference was held in Bogotá, Colombia, also featuring the launch of the Centre for Innovation on e-Government Development.

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies of Colombia (MINTIC) has signed a Project Document with UNDP, having the e-Government Branch, Division for Public Administration and Development Management of UN DESA providing substantive support and implementing over 70% of all activities. The Project is the result of a specific request from the Colombian Government to UN DESA, having a budget of more than US\$ 800,000 a year provided by Colombia.

The Project has been designed to benefit other countries in the region and globally, based on the principles created and disseminated by the UN e-Government Survey prepared by UN DESA. It also represents a new reference for innovative cooperation between Colombia, UN DESA and UNDP, having benefitted from significant constructive support from the UN Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) and the Capacity Development Office (CDO) of UN DESA.

The first major output of this partnership was the E-xperience Conference held in Bogotá on 26-27 November. The Conference launched the Centre for Innovation on e-Government Development, a pioneer initiative on a global scale. E-xperience

will also discuss knowledge management aspects on how to leapfrog advancements in e-Government development to modernize government in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness. A series of countries already confirmed their presence and support to E-xperience, including Azerbaijan, Brazil, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, among others.

For more information: [E-xperience Conference in Bogotá](#)

Knowledge-sharing on UN e-Government Development Index



Following Russia ICT Day, organized by the World Bank in cooperation with Russia in Washington DC, a delegation of 42 high-level officials from the Russian Federation visited UN DESA's

Administration and Development Management (DPADM) on 15 November, for a presentation on the United Nations e-Government Development Index (EGDI).

The Russian Federation has made significant progress in e-government development since 2010, both in absolute terms and relative to other countries, with a notable jump in its global ranking between 2010 (59th place) and 2012 (27th place). The gain can be attributed to: (a) a doubling in availability of government e-services; and (b) an increase in the number of Internet users (from 21% to 43% of the population) and fixed broadband subscriptions (from 3% to 11% of the population).

According to the World Bank, Russia has 76 million Internet users and an e-commerce turnover of \$13 billion a year. The country's e-government performance has reached the EU average, despite the challenges of a large population and vast geography. Its ICT industry boasts world-leading brands in the IT sector, fuelled by over 60,000 graduates in Science, Engineering and Mathematics each year.

To some extent, Russia has struggled with e-government development. The "Electronic Russia" programme (2002-2012) was an ambitious 9-year effort deemed by some observers to have been unsuccessful. Currently, Russia is pursuing an "Information Society State Programme" (2011-2020) with the aim of providing Russians with enhanced access to broadband Internet, developing the ICT sector, promoting Internet safety,

and simplifying interaction between citizens and the State through e-government.

DPADM gave several presentations on the 2014 e-Government Survey, Capacity Development, Open Government Data, Public Service Awards and Forum, and Innovation Transfer followed by Q&As on the ways to improve e-Government performance on federal and local levels in the country and bring the benefits of the information society to all citizens.

Within the margins of the visit, Thomas Gass, DESA's Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, met with the Minister of Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, Mr. Nikolai Nikiforov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Mr. Vitaly Churkin and other high level officials and DPADM staff members.

Discussions were held on the future cooperation of UN DESA and Russian Government in the field of ICT and its use to enhance service delivery for public administration. It was agreed that Russian Government will invite DPADM Advisors to assess e-Government performance and provide guidance and recommendations on how the Government can overall improve public service delivery, bridge the digital divide, implement whole-of-government approach, greater use of social media and open government.

For more information: [Website of DPADM](#)

Capacity development

Tools for reporting on MDG data



UN DESA's Statistics Division together with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA) is organizing a Training Workshop on SDMX tools for MDG Data Reporting on 2-5 December in Casablanca, Morocco.

Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) is the preferred standard for allowing National Statistical Offices (NSOs) to automate and standardize exchange of data and metadata associated with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The workshop will provide participants with an introduction to SDMX and focus on the process of mapping and exchanging indicators with SDMX through the features added to DevInfo 7.

Published by UN DESA's Statistics Division, DevInfo is a powerful database system for monitoring human development. It is a tool for organizing, storing and presenting data in a uniform way to facilitate data sharing at the country level across government departments, UN agencies and development partners. DevInfo has features that produce tables, graphs and maps for inclusion in reports, presentations and advocacy materials.

For more information:
[UN DESA's Statistics Division](#)
[DevInfo 7](#)

Evaluating census results



UN DESA's Statistics Division will conduct a Workshop on Census Evaluation, in collaboration with General Statistics Office of Viet Nam, in Hanoi, Viet Nam, on 2-6 December.

The regional workshop will bring together some fifteen national statisticians from eight Asian countries. The main purpose of the workshop is to provide the staff of national statistical offices with hands-on training to master

indirect demographic techniques necessary for the evaluation of census results.

Participants will learn, in particular, the methods to evaluate age-sex structure of population, fertility as well as mortality data obtained from national population and housing censuses. They are also expected to establish own professional networks through exchange of experiences and knowledge on census data analyses.

UN DESA's Statistics Division is the primary agency responsible at the international level for (1) collecting official national demographic including statistics on population size and structure, fertility, mortality and international migration; (2) publishing internationally agreed standards and guidelines on collecting, compiling and disseminating demographic statistics and (3) providing technical assistance to national statistical offices on topics related to the improvement of demographic statistics.

The division also publishes the Demographic Yearbook which collects, compiles and disseminates official statistics on a wide range of topics. Data have been collected from national statistical authorities since 1948 through a set of questionnaires dispatched annually by UN DESA's Statistics Division to over 230 national statistical offices.

For more information: [UN DESA's Statistics Division](#)

Engaging citizens through e-participation



The National Capacity Building Workshop on Developing Capacity for e-Participation: Engaging Citizens in Development Policy and Decision-making Processes through Information Communication

Technologies (ICTs) will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan on 3-5 December.

The event is organized by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies (MoCIT) of the Republic of Azerbaijan in cooperation with United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Country Office in Azerbaijan, Ministry of Economy and Industry of Azerbaijan and Civil Service Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan with substantive assistance of UN DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM).

The workshop will serve as an enabling platform of the World Summit for Information Society to enhance the knowledge of national practitioners and professionals in the current concepts, approaches, and practices in engaging citizens in the decision-making process in formulating and implementing national development plans including the use of ICTs. It is expected that the participants of the workshop will learn and share their experiences and exchange best practices in e-participation including aspects of regulatory and institutional frameworks in engaging citizens through e-participation in public policy and service delivery.

The workshop sessions will provide opportunities for participants to interact with speakers and resource persons in order to develop new capacities for designing and implementing successful e-participation strategies and policies for a more transparent, accountable and efficient government and citizen engagement and participation, as well as to create and strengthen networks of stakeholders and practitioners.

Approximately 40 government officials and professionals at mid to senior levels are expected to participate (e.g. advisors to government chief executives at national and regional levels; heads/deputy heads of departments/units, chief specialists/officers, etc.) representing Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies (MoCIT) of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Economy and Industry of Azerbaijan and Civil Service Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

For more information: [UN DESA's Division for Public Administration and Development Management \(DPADM\)](#)

Supporting national statistical systems



Seminars on Developing Programmes for the Implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) and Supporting

Statistics and the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting 2012 (2012 SEEA) and Supporting Statistics in Africa will be held in Kampala, Uganda on 9-13 December.

The seminars are organized by UN DESA's Statistics Division, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank, East Africa Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the Uganda Bureau.

The SNA seminar is organized to assist participating African countries with initiating the formulation of a national strategy and implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting socio-economic statistics with the objective of strengthening the national statistical system in support of improved policy making. It is expected that this initiative will lead to a multi-year statistical programme helping countries to change over to the 2008 SNA with a view to producing timely comparable national accounts statistics and short-term economic indicators which fully meets the user needs as well as complies with the international standards.

The objective of the SEEA seminar is to assist the participating African countries with developing an implementation strategy for the SEEA Central Framework on the basis of policy priorities and statistical development as well as to develop a sub-regional implementation strategy. It is expected that this initiative will lead to a multi-year statistical programme assisting countries in the adoption of the SEEA 2012 Central Framework with a view to produce timely comparable economic and environmental statistics based on selected environmental-economic accounts and environmental-economic indicators which fully meets the user needs as well as complies with the international standards.

The seminars brings together senior managers from national statistical offices and senior representatives from government agencies using economic and environmental information for policy setting from countries in Africa to discuss the development of a national implementation strategy for the 2008 SNA and the SEEA 2012 Central Framework. The aim is also to share experiences among countries in the region and facilitate cooperation amongst the neighbouring countries as well as north-south and triangular cooperation in support of the SNA and SEEA implementation strategy in Africa.

For more information:

[UN DESA's Statistics Division](#)

Strengthening public sector human resource management



A capacity building workshop on "Innovation and Performance Evaluation in Africa's Public Service: The Role of Human Resource Managers" will be organized in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 11-

13 December.

The event is arranged by UN DESA in partnership with the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network (APS-HRMnet) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

The main objective of the workshop is to exchange ideas and best practices and explore strategies for strengthening the role of human resource managers in promoting innovation and performance evaluation of the public service with the aim of building the capacity of the public service in Africa for efficient public service delivery.

Innovation is not an exclusive phenomenon that is happening only in the private sector. The public sector has also demonstrated capability to innovate in order to improve delivering public services. To validate that, one has just to look at the increasing rate of nominations to the United Nations Public Service Award each year which has gone up from 81 in 2003 to 601 in 2013.

However, most innovative practices so far nominated focus on improving service delivery in the areas including health, education and gender equality. Very few addresses the improvement of performance of the human resources that are delivering the services. While it is critical that the services delivered become better, it is also important that the capacities for innovation especially in terms of human resources are supported and improved.

For more information:

[“Innovation and Performance Evaluation in Africa’s Public Service: The Role of Human Resource Managers”](#)

Publications and Websites

Technical reports

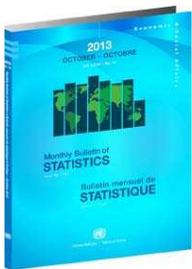
Pre-release of the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2013

The first chapter on global economic outlook of the WESP 2013 will be launched on 12 December at 11 am in New York. A joint product of UN DESA, UNCTAD and the five United Nations regional commissions, this publication provides an overview of recent global economic performance and short-term prospects for the world economy and of some key global economic policy and development issues. One of its purposes is to serve as a point of reference for discussions on economic, social and related issues taking place in various United Nations entities during the year.

- [More information](#)

Statistical compilations

Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and MBS Online



The Monthly Bulletin of Statistics presents current economic and social statistics for more than 200 countries and territories of the world. It contains over 50 tables of monthly and/or bimonthly, quarterly and annual data on a variety of subjects illustrating important economic trends and developments, including population, prices, employment and earnings, energy, manufacturing, transport, construction, international merchandise trade and finance.

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In addition to the regular recurrent monthly tables, this issue includes the quarterly and bimonthly tables: Retail price indices relating to living expenditures of United Nations officials; Civil aviation traffic: passenger-km and cargo net ton-km; Total exports and imports by countries or areas: volume, unit value, terms of trade and purchasing power of exports, in US dollars.

- [More information](#)

National Accounts Statistics: Main Aggregates and Detailed Tables, 2012, Parts I, II, III, IV and V, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.X/50

The first National Accounts yearbook appeared in 1958 and contained data for 70 countries and territories. The National Accounts Statistics: Main Aggregates and Detailed Tables, 2012 (MADT 2012) contains 2001-2012 data for 204 countries and territories. The estimates for each country or area are presented in separate chapters, containing statistics on national accounts aggregates and detailed variables such as gross domestic product, national income, saving, household and government consumption expenditure, gross capital formation, exports and imports, value added, compensation of employees, operating surplus, etc.

Data are reproduced as they are reported by the countries in their respective national currencies. The MADT dataset has been updated with 2012 data on the UNdata Portal at: <http://data.un.org/Explorer.aspx?d=SNA>.

- [More information](#)

National Accounts Statistics: Analysis of Main Aggregates, 2012 ST/ESA/STAT/Ser.X/51

The National Accounts Statistics: Analysis of Main Aggregates, 2012 contains in the form of analytical tables a summary of the principal national accounting aggregates based on official national accounts data for more than 200 countries and areas of the world for the years 1970 to 2012. It also contains a section on the estimation methods used for compiling the data. It is prepared by UN DESA's Statistics Division with the generous co-operation of national statistical offices and serves as a valuable source of information on the economic situation of countries and areas. The publication will be available in December 2013.

The tables of the publication include analysis of data on gross domestic product (GDP) by different structural components. The types of analysis presented are classified into the four major categories listed below:

- Analysis of the level of total and per capita GDP
- Analysis of the percentage shares of GDP by type of expenditure and gross value added by kind of economic activity
- Analysis of economic development expressed in term of real growth of GDP and its components by type of

expenditure and gross value added by kind of economic activity

- Analysis of price development reflected by implicit price deflators of GDP

To download the time-series data:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/selQuick.asp>
<http://data.un.org/Explorer.aspx?d=SNAAMA>

The Demographic Yearbook (DYB) Special Issue on Household Characteristics

The Tabulations of the DYB Special issue on Household Characteristics has been published. The tabulations contain the available household characteristics data reported to DESA's Statistics Division for the Population Censuses conducted worldwide during the 2000 and 2010 rounds of censuses. In particular, the datasets present information on: (i) population by type of living quarters, by relation to the reference person, by age and sex; (ii) on households by different characteristics such as age, sex and marital status of reference person, by size and by type of household.

- [More information](#)

The Demographic Yearbook 2012 (DYB 2012)

The DYB 2012 is the sixty-third issue in a series published by the United Nations since 1948. It contains tables on a wide range of demographic statistics, including a world summary of selected demographic statistics, statistics on the size, distribution and trends in national populations, fertility, foetal mortality, infant and maternal mortality, general mortality, nuptiality and divorce. Data are shown by urban/rural residence, as available. In addition, the volume provides Technical Notes, a synoptic table, a historical index and a listing of the issues of the Demographic Yearbook published to date. This issue of Demographic Yearbook contains data as available including the reference year 2012.

- [More information](#)

Outreach material

Sustainable Development in Action – Issue 10, Volume 1

Published by UN DESA's Division for Sustainable Development, the latest issue highlights among others, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The newsletter aims to highlight the work carried out by Member States, the UN Major Groups and other relevant stakeholders in implementing sustainable development and leading the way to the Future We Want.

- [Read full issue](#)

Youth Flash Newsletter

Published by UN DESA's Division for Social Policy and Development Focal Point on Youth, the October issue is available online with a feature article entitled "Youth partnerships and the United Nations: Reflections on the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development Open Meeting with Youth". The newsletter is prepared with input from UN offices, agencies, and from youth organizations around the world.

- [Read full issue](#)

DESA NGO News

The November issue published by UN DESA's NGO Branch is available online and features among other things an article on how the UN is linking private, public partnerships to create climate change solutions. The newsletter provides the most up-to-date information on news and upcoming events of interest to civil society at UN headquarters in New York, Geneva and elsewhere.

- [Read full issue](#)

Discussion papers

Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects No. 60

Published by DESA's Development Policy and Analysis Division, the November issue states that the global manufacturing production has improved, the economic recovery is strengthening in developed economies, and the public fiscal stimulus programmes have been a determinant factor in economic growth in many developing countries.

- [To download](#)

Comings and Goings

Goings



Ms. Jan McAlpine, Director of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), retired in November 2013. During her tenure as Director, she launched the innovative Facilitative Process, which provides enhanced capacity development for developing countries to mobilize forest financing, and developed a fundraising strategy which generated over \$18 million by developing a bottom-up, technical and expert program of work for UNFF.

Throughout her 35-year career, she has worked on strategic policy and planning related to environment, trade, finance and social issues at the United Nations, in Government, including the Office of the President of the United States and in multilateral not-for-profits and academic institutions. Ms. McAlpine previously served as Senior Negotiator and Advisor for Forests for the United States Department of State, as well as the Chairman of the International Tropical Timber Council and is currently a member of the World Future Council.

Ms. McAlpine has been instrumental in conceiving and implementing international initiatives such as the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, the Liberia Forest Initiative and most recently Rwanda's Forest and Landscape Restoration initiative. Her efforts resulted in a \$9.5 million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for the Rwanda project (\$63 million in total funding) in 2012. She has been honored by various academic institutions including the Swedish Royal Academy and the German Society of Foresters.

Jan McAlpine grew up in Central and Southern Africa, in Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Kenya and South Africa.

See the [DESA News interview with Ms. McAlpine](#) that she gave ahead of the UN Forum on Forest 10 that took place on 8-19 April 2013 in Istanbul.

Comings

The following staff members were promoted in November:

Kebebush Welkema, Research Assistant, Division for Sustainable Development

Lydia Debbie Gatan, Staff Assistant, Division for Public Administration and Development Management

Thilo Maier, Information Systems Officer, Statistics Division

Leah McDavid, Information Technology Assistant, Financing for Development Office

LienKim Nguyen, Editorial Assistant, Population Division

Richard Roehrl, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, Division for Sustainable Development

Calendar

December

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

3 December

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/index.asp>

Second session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing

2-6 December, New York

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1558>

National Capacity Building Workshop on Developing Capacity for e-Participation

3-5 December, Baku, Azerbaijan

International Workshop on e-Government Best Practices

3-5 December, Amman, Jordan

<http://www.unpan.org/DPADM/tabid/420/Default.aspx>

Global Conference on Rural Energy Access

4-6 December, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&nr=489&type=13&menu=1634>

Seminars on Developing Programmes for the Implementation of the System of National Accounts

9-13 December, Kampala, Uganda

Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, Sixth session

9-13 December, New York

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=490&menu=1476>

A capacity building workshop on “Innovation and Performance Evaluation in Africa’s Public Service: The Role of Human Resource Managers”

11-13 December, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

“Expert Group Meeting for the Global Sustainable Development Report 2013 – Engaging National Assessments”

12-13 December, Beijing

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=501&menu=1621>

DESA News is an insider's look at the United Nations in the area of economic and social development policy. The newsletter is produced by the Communications and Information Management Service of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with DESA Divisions. DESA News is issued every month. Please click [here](#) to send inquiries.