

Background Note

USG Wu Hongbo Meeting with H.E. Mr. Kingsley Mamabolo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations and Chairman of the Group of 77 and China

Role of South Africa in the Global Statistical System

Statistics South Africa is a very well respected National Statistical Office. Under the leadership of the Statistician General Mr. Pali Lehohla (Chair of the Statistical Commission sessions in 2008/9) Statistics South Africa has taken a number of key initiatives to strengthen statistics in the African continent, e.g. the annual holding of the African Symposium for Statistical Development. Statistics South Africa also played a leading role in the successful implementation of the 2010 Census Round in Africa and is now actively supporting a regional programme on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics. Mr. Lehohla was also a member of the Secretary General's expert panel on data revolution.

Assisting the Member States in the Formulation of a Development Indicator Framework in support of the post-2015 Development Agenda

The UN Statistics Division of DESA serves as the substantive Secretariat for the UN Statistical Commission who will meet for its 46th session from 3-6 March 2015 here in New York. One of main agenda items is the discussion of an appropriate development indicator framework in support of the 2015 Development Agenda. The Statistical Commission has a General Assembly Mandate (A/RES/57/270B (2003)) to act as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of development indicators. The Commission has launched an extensive workprogramme on data and indicators since 2013, providing 'statistical notes' to the Open Working Group, organizing expert groups and conducting at this point a technical review of a preliminary proposed indicator set based on the 169 targets recommended by the Open Working Group. It is expected that the forthcoming Commission session will put in place appropriate working mechanisms (Inter Agency and Expert Group on indicators for Sustainable Development Goals) to ensure that all aspects of the new development agenda will be measured in a solid and sustainable manner.

The formulation of a high-quality 'indicator framework' (=structured architecture, that distinguishes between various layers of indicators for

different monitoring purposes: global, regional, national and sectoral) will require time after the completion of the political negotiation. The Commission is committed to complete this work through its various working mechanisms by the end of 2015.

Fundamental importance of Capacity Building to Strengthen National Statistical Systems

Thanks to concerted efforts by many countries, which were supported by the international community, the availability of data for the MDGs has significantly increased over the past 15 years. Nonetheless, too many countries, especially developing countries, still do not have an adequate information infrastructure for their own national development policies and for global reporting on common goals. Given the increase of scope of the development agenda, it is anticipated that the information demands will further increase. The statistical community has repeatedly voiced its concerns that the number of core-indicators for global monitoring needs to remain limited to be manageable. A core set of 100-120 indicators has been proposed. Also capacity building efforts to strengthen national statistical systems will have to be significantly increased.

The Data Revolution as an enabler for the implementation of the development indicator framework.

Whilst the data revolution goes beyond compiling data for the post-2015 development agenda, the report of the Independent Expert and Advisor Group is certainly comprehensive in listing all the challenges related to the implementation of the post-2015 indicator framework: financial, institutional, technological, methodological etc. The report and its recommendations will be discussed by the Statistical Commission, in order to gauge member-states support and establish priorities. Follow-up by the Statistical Commission will most likely build on a number of already ongoing Commission initiatives (capacity building programmes, Big Data, methodological work to develop new indicators, e.g. indicators on governance). Furthermore a CEB working group, where UNSD/DESA is playing a leading role is currently analyzing the list of recommendations of the data revolution group, identifying work streams already existing in the UN family (which could be built upon and intensified), identifying also areas where new initiatives have to be taken by the UN system – in partnership with relevant stakeholders. The preliminary conclusion of this work is expected in March.