

Dear Colleagues,

We would like to give you a warm welcome to the last Phase of this e-discussion on ***“Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the MDGs in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future”*** which will take place **between 3 and 16 March 2014**.

The theme of this Phase, will be ***“Measuring progress in MDG achievement and beyond”*** and this phase will be moderated jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

Measurement is central to MDG achievement: progress towards quantified targets is tracked through indicators, and monitoring them accurately is essential for reporting as well as for guiding policy design and implementation. The MDGs, therefore, marked for many countries an increased emphasis on timely and reliable data and a consequent strengthening of capacity in those areas.

However, data quality and availability continue to be issues in many places, as do harmonization and the sustainability of collection efforts. Many opportunities also remain to be tapped for their optimal use in policy making. In addition, several important dimensions associated with MDG achievement may not be quantifiable. At the same time, new technologies have emerged and become widely available, offering the potential to harness data from new sources.

In 2014, as we anticipate continuing to work on the unfinished business of the MDGs while broadening the global development agenda to encompass other dimensions, it is important to take stock of what we have learned from our experience with data for the MDGs, and how best to incorporate more robust and broader measures of progress. Achieving the SDGs (sustainable development goals), or any other element of the post-2015 development agenda, will require a ‘data revolution’ that taps into traditional and non-traditional sources of data and increases capacity, coordination and partnerships among all relevant actors.

This section will deal with the importance of rigorous measurement, monitoring and reporting on progress as the basis for effective, evidence-based policy-making and accountability, taking into account the social and cultural context of each country. It will also stress the centrality of innovations in measurement that could help address the complexity of assessing progress in the future development framework, in ways that respond to the emerging inclusive and holistic vision. Traditional and non-traditional sources of data – censuses, household surveys, administrative records, ‘big data’, ICT capabilities – and the associated capacity needs at the country level, will all be included, taking into account the MDG experience. Considering the above, we would like to present to you the following three questions to guide this phase of the e-discussion:

- How can progress in development be better monitored and measured at the national/sub-national, regional and global levels? How can existing challenges in this regard be addressed?

- What are the data and appropriate levels of disaggregation (rural/urban; gender; population groups) required for effective national reporting on development progress, especially for the emerging development agenda?
- How can innovations in data sources and tools be used to overcome measurement limitations and improve comparability across countries? What are the technical support needs?

We look forward to your insights and concrete examples to help illuminate your points, and wish you all a fruitful and stimulating discussion!

Kind regards,

Shantanu Mukherjee, Policy Adviser, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP

Matthias Reister, Senior Statistician, Office of the Director, Statistics Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)