



Regional Commissions New York Office

DIALOGUE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS WITH THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

“Beyond GDP”: Regional perspectives and initiatives shaping new measures of progress”

80th session of the UN General Assembly
Tuesday, 21 October 2025, from 10:00-12:00hrs EST

Concept Note

I. BACKGROUND

The world is grappling with profound and interconnected crises. Global uncertainties and economic fragmentation are putting development progress at risk. Economic growth remains fragile and uneven, with many developing countries facing high debt burdens, shrinking fiscal space, and volatile commodity markets. Social inequalities are widening, leaving millions without adequate social protection, healthcare, or education; and environmental pressures from climate change to biodiversity loss and pollution are threatening the stability of societies and ecosystems alike.

In this context, reliance on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the dominant measure of progress has become increasingly inadequate. As the Secretary-General has noted, overreliance on GDP is a “glaring blind spot” in global policymaking. Since 2020, momentum around the “Beyond GDP” agenda has accelerated through a series of high-profile initiatives such as the OECD Centre on Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability, and Equal Opportunity, the UN’s “Beyond GDP” initiative and its *Valuing What Counts* report and the adoption of the *Pact for the Future* at the 2024 Summit of the Future.

The Pact calls for the development and adoption of multidimensional metrics that capture the full spectrum of sustainable development in line with the 2030 Agenda. It commits Member States to support the development of a framework for measuring progress, building on the work of the UN Statistical Commission and the recommendations of the Independent High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP appointed by the Secretary-General in May 2025.

Member States in the recently adopted [Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the 2025 session of ECOSOC and the high-level political forum on sustainable development](#) also called for the consideration of using measures of progress as a complement to existing policies and practices.

Regional Commissions contribute to reshaping development metrics to capture progress that is more inclusive, sustainable, and grounded in good governance. Through their analytical and capacity development efforts, the Regional Commissions are supporting countries in developing and applying multidimensional indicators. They also facilitate intergovernmental dialogue on complementary measures of progress and link the new metrics to regional development strategies, ensuring that measures inform policymaking, investment priorities, and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda.

Africa region

The Africa region is advancing a people- and planet-centered agenda that complements GDP with indicators of comprehensive wealth and sustainability, aligned with the AU’s Agenda 2063, the SDGs and SNA 2025.



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African countries are turning to comprehensive wealth accounting to reveal whether growth builds or erodes future capacity. Evidence of wealth depletion despite GDP gains strengthens the case for investing in education, health and natural assets as true capital.

Governments are increasingly embedding true-cost accounting into policy through System of Economic Environmental Accounting (SEEA)-based natural-capital accounts and environmentally extended supply-and-use tables, to quantify depletion, pollution and ecosystem-service losses, thereby enabling greener budgeting and appraisal of public investment.

The rapid urbanization trend in the region elevates the need for multidimensional quality-of-life metrics, with ECA and UN-Habitat's Quality of Life Initiative seeking to equip cities with a tailored index and dashboard-integrating SDG benchmarks and local priorities-to guide service delivery and inclusion. The region is also sharpening new tools, such as Human Capital Satellite Accounts and expanded time-use surveys help value skills, health and unpaid care -crucial for recognizing women's work beyond the SNA production boundary and informing gender-responsive policy.

Finally, data innovation, including satellite imagery and AI, is enabling small-area, high-frequency proxies for prosperity, improving targeting and early-warning. Looking ahead, Africa is exploring to adopt multidimensional dashboards and adapting indices such as UNCTAD's Productive Capacities Index and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), leveraging opportunities to link metrics to fiscal, climate and health budgeting while addressing challenges such as limited capacity, comparability and institutional uptake. ECA's role is to standardize methods, build capacity and translate metrics into decision-grade tools that make development truly inclusive, sustainable and future-proof.

Arab region

The Arab region's development experience underscores the inadequacy of income-based metrics. Regional assessments¹ show that these frameworks reveal persistent deficits in governance, inequality, and environmental sustainability—domains that income alone cannot capture but which central to people's wellbeing.

Governance remains the most binding constraint to assess progress on wellbeing. Despite improvements in education enrolment, health access, and digital infrastructure, weak institutions have prevented these gains from translating into better learning outcomes, healthier lives, or more equitable services. The region scores lowest among the developing regions on the Governance Index², with some countries with strong GDP per capita growth in the 2000s have been seen gains undermined by prolonged conflict. These deficits illustrate that growth in income, when not accompanied by effective governance and inclusion, cannot deliver sustained wellbeing.

To measure equitable progress in the Arab region, it is crucial to embed inequality reduction in its multiple dimensions in any development measure.³ While the Arab region has made notable progress in reducing within country inequality in some dimensions—particularly in health and education—income and wealth disparities remain deeply entrenched. A more comprehensive framework needs to incorporate vertical and horizontal inequalities to capture disparities across different socioeconomic groups, gender and geographic areas.

¹ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/world-development-challenges-beyond-income>.

² ESCWA, 2024. <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/global-development-index-methodology>.

³ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/arab-sustainable-development-report-2024>



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Environmental sustainability is another critical aspect of measuring wellbeing or vulnerability in the Arab region. The region is the most water scarce⁴ globally with chronic water stress and dependence on food imports. At the same time, Gulf countries, despite high human development achievements, record some of the weakest results in energy efficiency and carbon intensity due to fossil fuel dependence. Without factoring in environmental sustainability aspects, any measure of development would be inadequate to capture sustained wellbeing.

New policy domains are nonetheless emerging beyond income-based measures to inform policymaking, such as the Human Development Index (HDI), Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), and Global Competitiveness Index (GCI). Examples include the UAE's National Strategy for Wellbeing 2031⁵, the Oman's Vision 2040⁶, and Egypt's Vision 2030⁷.

New wellbeing metrics are emerging at the regional level as well. The System of National Accounts 2025⁸ broadens the national accounts framework to better capture elements affecting wellbeing and sustainability. In the Arab region, ESCWA's Global Development Index (GDI) ranks countries by considering quality-adjusted human development, environmental sustainability and governance.⁹ producing results that diverge in important ways from the HDI.

In sum, a Beyond GDP framework, anchored in governance reform, environmental resilience, and equity, offers the Arab region a more credible pathway to transform growth into genuine wellbeing, restore trust in institutions, and build a sustainable future aligned with global commitments.

Asia and the Pacific region

Home to approximately 4.8 billion people, nearly 60% of the global population, the Asia-Pacific region is diverse—spanning vast geographies, cultures, economies, and development levels. This diversity is a source of strength, offering a rich pool of experiences, innovations, and solutions to shared challenges.

First, the region is embracing a people- and planet-centered approach to development, with countries integrating broader measures of well-being and sustainability into their national development plans and SDG monitoring. This includes implementing global frameworks like the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and the 2025 System of National Accounts.

Second, ESCAP promotes regional and global dialogue to share country experiences and shape global standards. Key contributions include the UN Statistics Commission Side Event held in February 2022, the ESCAP Commission Side Event and paper “From GDP to Well-being and Sustainability” published in May 2022, and the Emerging Issues paper prepared for the Committee on Statistics, which led to prioritizing complementary progress measures, especially climate-related statistics.

⁴ <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/event/materials/8-%20Water%20challenges%20in%20the%20Arab%20region%202400690E.pdf>

⁵ <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/social-affairs/national-strategy-for-wellbeing-2031>.

⁶ https://www.oman2040.om/uploads/publication/20231105221146-2023-11-05publication221143_.pdf.

⁷ Egypt Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, 2023.

https://mped.gov.eg/Files/Egypt_Vision_2030_EnglishDigitalUse.pdf.

⁸ UN Statistics Division. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/sna2025.asp>.

⁹ ESCWA, 2024. <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/global-development-index-methodology>.



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Third, countries in the region are pioneering national approaches. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness framework includes nine domains and thirty-three indicators. New Zealand's Living Standards Framework captures individual and collective well-being across environmental, cultural, human, financial, and social dimensions. The Philippines is developing a Quality-of-Life Index rooted in long-term aspirations, including material and non-material aspects such as culture, family, and subjective well-being.

ESCAP recognizes that conventional GDP overlooks environmental degradation and inequality. While national contexts vary, standardized frameworks like the OECD's Better Life Index can complement—not replace—tailored national approaches. ESCAP's continued engagement ensures that regional experiences inform global efforts, supporting a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future beyond GDP.

Latin America and the Caribbean region

The region's three development traps—low capacity for growth; high inequality, low social mobility and cohesion; and weak institutional capacities and governance—underscore the complex factors shaping its sustainable development path and highlight the value of more comprehensive metrics to measure development. In a region of mostly middle-income countries, how development is measured also influences access to cooperation and concessional support in such areas as financing for climate change resilience.

ECLAC plays an important role in collecting, harmonizing, producing and disseminating comparable regional data and statistics. It is well-positioned to support the construction and implementation of the Beyond GDP framework, including by addressing member States' capacity building needs. In addition to channeling regional perspectives and good practices, such as environmental and ecosystem accounting methodologies to the Beyond GDP process, ECLAC can also leverage its ongoing technical support and data and statistics innovation experiences. Examples include supporting countries to develop and adopt official multidimensional poverty indices, using statistical models to estimate poverty in small areas, developing satellite accounts for inclusion to evaluate social inclusion policies, and advancing georeferenced and disaggregated data, including on gender equality through the Gender Equality Observatory relaunched in August 2025 at the Regional Conference on Women. Through its convening role, ECLAC is also the primary space for intergovernmental discussions of national statistical offices in the framework of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, which will hold its next session from 25–27 November 2025.

UNECE region

For many years, UNECE member countries efforts in advancing measures that go beyond GDP have resulted in several methodological guides, supporting the development of measures that inform policy decisions related to well-being and sustainable development.

The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) has developed guides and frameworks that assist countries in measuring [Sustainable Development](#), [Quality of Employment](#), [Human Capital](#), [Education and Training](#), [Poverty](#) and [Unpaid Household Service Work](#). This guidance has supported countries in developing statistics beyond traditional economic measures. For instance, Norway and the UK have provided analysis on how education and training contribute to human capital development and Italy has recently published indicators informing climate change and disaster risk related policies.

More recent publications include [Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion](#), presenting practices from 31 countries; the guide, [Subjective Poverty](#) and the [Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators – 2023 Edition](#), providing a robust reference framework for producing



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environmental statistics and indicators. The CES continues with the newly adopted [Guidelines on measuring well-being](#), that will feed into the work of the Expert Group of Well-being Measurement at global level and a set of [core disaster-risk-related indicators](#), providing practical tools to capture dimensions of human security, resilience and quality of life that are not reflected in GDP.

High on the agenda are the implementation of global standards like the updated SNA 2025, and SEEA Central Framework. The updated SNA and SEEA will make the link between the economy and the environment more visible and will provide a wealth of supplementary statistics in support of people's wellbeing, climate change, sustainability and other policies.

Finally, several expert meetings in the ECE region, such as Group of Experts on National Accounts, the Joint UNECE/OECD Expert Meetings on SEEA Implementation and the Expert Meeting on Measuring Poverty and Inequality, serve as platforms for countries to share experiences from implementation of beyond GDP measures. To further strengthen the knowledge exchange, an online [Inventory of thematic and extended accounts](#) offers comprehensive insights into the supplementary data and tables, published by countries to expand on the traditional macroeconomic statistics.

As showcased in the overview of regional trends, there is growing effort towards people- and planet-centered framework for measuring development progress beyond GDP. The body of knowledge to develop interdisciplinary metrics that reflect the wellbeing of current and future generations and are applicable across geographical contexts and timeframes is growing.

II. OBJECTIVES

The Dialogue with the Executive Secretaries will focus on the theme of “*Beyond GDP: Regional perspectives and initiatives shaping new measures of progress*”. Building on the outcomes of the FFD4, and in preparation for the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha, the Dialogue will afford space to zoom in and debate on regional perspectives and innovations with a view to informing the High-Level Expert Group's recommendations.

The specific objectives of the Dialogue will be to:

1. share insights and regional perspectives on new measures of progress, and showcase initiatives spearheaded by the Regional Commissions that are piloting or mainstreaming complementary measures of progress.
2. raise awareness on current rethinking on development metrics, and exchange views on opportunities and implications, with a focus on key dimensions such as well-being, sustainability, inclusion, governance, and vulnerability.
3. exchange lessons learned from cross-country and cross-sectoral experiences in developing and applying such metrics.
4. highlight the role of regional cooperation in harmonizing approaches, ensuring comparability, and linking “Beyond GDP” metrics to the 2030 Agenda; and
5. inform the global process led by the High-Level Expert Group and the Statistical Commission by feeding in regional insights and policy priorities.



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III. FORMAT

The Chair of the General Assembly Second Committee, **His Excellency Lamin B. Dibba, Permanent Representative of Gambia**, will deliver opening remarks. The Executive Secretaries of the five UN Regional Commissions (or their Deputies/designated representatives) will make presentations (7 mins max. each). Interactive rounds of discussion with members of the Committee will follow.

IV. PROGRAMME

- 10:00** Welcoming remarks, Chair of the Second Committee, **His Excellency Lamin B. Dibba, Permanent Representative of Gambia**.
- 10:05** Presentations by the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions.
- Executive Secretary of ECA, Mr. Claver Gatete, 2025 Coordinator of the Regional Commissions.
 - Executive Secretary of ESCWA, Ms. Rola Dashti (virtual).
 - Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana (virtual), represented in the room by Mr. Adnan Aliani, Director, SPMD, ESCAP.
 - Executive Secretary of ECLAC, Mr. José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs (virtual).
 - Executive Secretary of UNECE, Ms. Tatiana Molcean (virtual)
- 10:45** Rounds of interventions from the floor.
- 11:45** Responses and concluding remarks by the Executive Secretaries.
- 11:55** Closing remarks by the Chair.

V. DOCUMENTATION

ECA/ Africa region

- [Quality of life Initiative](#)

ESCWA / Arab region

- [Global Development Index – Methodology](#)
- [World development challenges beyond income](#) (July 2024)
- [World Development Challenges Report: Development from a Broader Lens](#) (October 2022)

ESCAP / Asia and the Pacific region

- Working Paper: [Beyond GDP – The idea of global sustainability accounting](#) (May 2022)
- [From gross domestic product to well-being and sustainability](#): Emerging Issues paper for 8th Session of ESCAP Committee on Statistics (June 2022)

ECLAC / Latin America and the Caribbean region

- [Multidimensional Poverty Index for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (in Spanish) (April 2025)
- [Beyond GDP: statistical challenges of measuring development](#) (August 2022)
- [Towards an overarching conceptual framework for social and demographic statistics](#) (March 2025)
Guidelines for the Development of an Integrated System of Well-being Indicators
- [Methodological guide on time-use measurements in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (July 2022)
- [Unit-level models for generating poverty maps at the subnational level](#) (in Spanish) (January 2023)
- [Measuring inequality through the integration of data sources](#) (in Spanish) (January 2025)



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UNECE / UNECE region

- [Guidelines on measurement of well-being](#) – White cover (May 2025)
- [Measuring Social Cohesion – Relations Between Groups](#) (September 2025)
- [CES Set of Core Disaster-Risk-Related Indicators](#) - White cover (March 2025)
- [Subjective poverty](#) (March 2025)
- [Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region in 2025: More Data, Persistent Challenges](#) (March 2025)
- [Data for Climate Action: How National Statistical Offices Can Contribute](#) (January 2025)
- [Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators - 2023 Edition](#) (August 2024)
- [In-depth review of measurement of current well-being](#) (June 2023)
- [Social Cohesion Concept and Measurement](#) (December 2023)
- [Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion](#) (May 2022)
- [Thematic and Extended Accounts – online inventory](#)
- [Poverty measurement: guide to data disaggregation](#) (December 2020)
- [Satellite Account for Education and Training: Compilation Guide](#) (June 2020)
- [Guide on Valuing Unpaid Household Service Work](#) (December 2017)
- [Guide on poverty measurement](#) (December 2017)
- [Guide on Measuring Human Capital](#) (December 2016)
- [Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment](#) (October 2015)
- [Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development](#) (November 2013, jointly prepared by UNECE/OECD/Eurostat)

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