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Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals and Targets Session: Indicators

Statement by Kushla Munro, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

As delivered

Thank you co-facilitators and thank you to the UN Statistical Commission and Member State statistical bodies who contributed, on tight timeframes, to the technical report on the process of developing an indicator framework.

The report provides a number of useful insights to inform our discussions on the goals and targets and also highlights current uncertainties with our intended follow-up and review process.

Firstly, it is clear from statements made by member states that there is no appetite for the indicators to be negotiated as part of this intergovernmental process.

We agree with this position.

As the report emphasises, the scope of the agenda means there is a great deal of work to do to develop new indicators and data sets that build-on and make effective use of existing frameworks and indicators.

These processes require careful consideration and an ability to refine indicators over time, and should not be rushed in the context of our own timetable.

We need to focus on what we want to achieve over the next 15 years, not the next six months.

While we applaud the UN Statistical Commission for this work, the results of the survey demonstrate a number of deficiencies:

- In our region, there were a limited the number of responses from developing countries in the Asia-Pacific driven by both the time constraints imposed and also compounded by capacity constraints in our region
- We also know that the Secretariat of the Pacific Community coordinated responses from the Pacific and was counted as one country – giving less weight to individual Pacific country responses.

This means the results of the survey are skewed toward the higher-capacity end of national statistical agencies. Even taking this bias into account, almost a third of the 304 indicators are ranked as CBB, meaning they are considered difficult to measure even with strong effort, and are only somewhat relevant.

As it currently stands, the scope of the proposed agenda appears to be predicated on the need for a large number of indicators; however we should strive for the use of more cross-cutting and innovative metrics

- this requires careful consideration and consultation with technical experts; we should not rush the processes in the context of our own busy timetable.

We should strive for global indicators that allow us to generate regular, high level snapshots of progress against the agenda and help drive transformational change.

Now I wish to turn to the implications of this indicator work for our discussion on goals and targets.

Firstly, thematic experts undertaking analysis on the indicators have raised issues that question the adequacy and quality of the proposed targets themselves.

For instance, many individual targets are long with multiple concepts.

Other targets are not clearly expressed or are ambiguous.

Such targets, while reflecting legitimate global development priorities, make it difficult to find appropriate global indicators to measure success.

In the context of seeking a robust, coherent and relevant indicator framework for the post-2015 development agenda, it is our responsibility to provide the clearest possible guidance to the technical experts charged with developing this framework.

The targets are the conceptual link between the goals we have articulated and the actions that should be undertaken to achieve them.

We have more work to do on these targets to ensure the agenda will drive implementation and achieve the development outcomes we have agreed are shared priorities.

We do not seek to reduce the ambition or scope of the agenda and fully respect the delicate political balance of what we have been able to achieve.

Instead, our pragmatic approach is informed by discussions with our development partners, and an unwillingness to impose unmanageable reporting burdens on countries with limited capacity, particularly where it diverts attention from delivering good development outcomes.

In closing, we reiterate our thanks to the technical experts who have endeavoured, on tight timeframes, to send us clear messages about the manageability of what this process is proposing.

We look forward to further discussions on how we can better support the work of these experts, and on the principles for follow up and review processes that are efficient and fit for purpose.