Summary of the Session organized by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development

(Steering Committee: ITU, UNDESA, UNCTAD)

16 March 2023

Session 216— ICT Indicators for monitoring international goals and targets

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- The session provided an overview of the data availability of the current core list of ICT indicators defined by the Partnership and endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2022, and discussed whether the list and their methodologies, are sufficient to answer current and future policy making needs. The session also addressed capacity building needs of countries and other challenges faced, such as lack of resources to conduct surveys, to produce official ICT statistics.

- The UN SG's Tech Envoy in his opening remarks highlighted a few priority areas for future work on digital statistics for development:
    - i) the need for capacity development efforts especially in developing countries in measuring progress via indicators,
    - ii) bridging the gap between the statistical community and the holders of new data sources such as big data and AI, since they are currently working in silos
    - iii) investing in improving the timeliness of indicators through the production of near-realtime data,
    - iv) using common data models for comparability across regions and for quality and reliable indicators, and
    - v) urgently identifying follow-up indicators to measure progress in development goals and for the upcoming Global Digital Compact, while acknowledging that we may be measuring a moving target.

- The UN SG's Tech Envoy stated that this session may not be as glamorous as others during the WSIS Forum, but it is surely one of the most important, since data is crucial

for decision making. On the role of indicators to assess progress towards international goals and targets, he noted that "we must measure what we treasure".

Towards WSIS+20 and WSIS beyond 2025, please share your views on the emerging trends, challenges, achievements, and opportunities in the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines to date (5-8 bullets)

- Much progress has been made by several countries in collecting ICT indicators. However, there are still many countries that do not collect enough of the core indicators as a baseline. For example, statistics from developing countries on ICT use by businesses are still scarce.

- The main challenges for many statistical offices in developing countries remain the lack of resources and continued capacity building.

- In addition, it is difficult for official statistics to keep up with, and measure, the evolving nature of the ICT landscape, with AI and other emerging and disruptive technologies increasingly present in the practice of organizations, governments, and individuals.

- There is an opportunity for official statistics to incorporate new data sources such as big data to produce more timely data in order to monitor ICT adoption of countries and inform policies to leverage ICTs for accelerating the achievement of the SDGs.

- The private sector can help address the measurement challenge by developing collaboration in data sharing with entities responsible for official statistics.

Tangible outcomes (such as key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and commitments (3-5 bullet points)

- The panel highlighted the importance of having more timely and disaggregated data to inform public policy, and common data models to ensure comparability between countries.

- There was also an acknowledgement of the existence of significant gaps in data, but also in resources and skills, between developing and developed countries, with LDCs lagging the furthest behind. Existing initiatives to bridge those gaps include the development of toolkits to aid the data collection from countries, as well as online

tools to facilitate the reporting of existing data. However, more effort is needed in this area.

- UN agencies present in the meeting reaffirmed their commitment to their efforts of reviewing the existing list of core ICT indicators.

Actionable plan (2-5 points)

- The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development will continue to regularly discuss ways to help countries increase availability of data for the core indicators, as well as to raise awareness of the importance of ICT statistics to guide policy aimed at achieving international goals and targets.

- The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development will continue to disseminate methodological guidance and technical material on ICT statistics, online and through capacity building activities. Responses:

- Finally, the Partnership will continue to update the list of core indicators and its methodological guidance to reflect the evolution of international goals and targets, emerging needs such as measuring the use of ICT for post-pandemic recovery, and the potential to leverage the changing data landscape (including privately held data) to inform official statistics.

Suggestions for thematic aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2024 (WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event) (one paragraph)

- The role of ICT indicators in achieving the 2030 Agenda
- Strategic links between the WSIS Forum 2024 and the Global Digital Compact (GDC): the role of monitoring and indicators