Possible options for TOSSD governance arrangements

TOSSD Task Force Issues Paper[1] - Agenda item 6
24 – 25 January 2018

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.   Efforts to establish the TOSSD framework go beyond fleshing out the details of its statistical features and processes. In order to maintain the integrity and relevance of the TOSSD system, it will be necessary to establish a governance framework that, over time, will ensure the quality and consistency of TOSSD data and facilitate adjustments in the light of implementation challenges and new needs and contexts.

2.   This document is designed to focus attention on practical next steps in shaping a functional, effective TOSSD governance arrangement. Task Force members have confirmed the centrality of the UN system as the "political home" for TOSSD governance. They have highlighted the importance of situating future technical work squarely within institutions with statistical expertise. In keeping with these indications, this document sets out a number of entry points within the UN system where statistical expertise and links to the SDG monitoring process are prominently featured and which lend themselves to a possible oversight role for maintaining the quality and relevance of the TOSSD statistical standard.

3.   Following the introduction, the text summarises current thinking on the core features and possible modalities of TOSSD governance, including conclusions from the December Task Force discussion on this topic. It then lists a number of UN bodies that combine the requisite technical and political features (based on suggestions made in previous Task Force meetings), followed by questions designed to elicit further insights and guidance from the Task Force. The objective of the Task Force discussion is to i) secure guidance from members on the best "fit" among different UN bodies and institutional processes, which will help focus the forward consultation process with UN representatives and ii) identify Task Force "TOSSD champions" who can help advance discussions with UN representatives on possible TOSSD governance arrangements.

II.   BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON TOSSD GOVERNANCE DISCUSSIONS

4.   Discussions about possible TOSSD governance arrangements in diverse settings over the past three years have highlighted the importance of establishing a global system that i) favours exchange, access to technical expertise and reach into the broad diversity of providers of development co-operation, and ii) features the UN in a prominent role alongside an array of development actor groupings and communities. Political guidance and technical expertise would need to be combined in order to provide for adequate leadership and oversight while ensuring the technical quality of the TOSSD statistical framework. Further, to maintain the TOSSD reporting standard and discuss any issues that may arise in implementing the TOSSD system, it would be necessary to designate a body

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that engages with reporters/data centre staff and convenes meetings to discuss topics of concern and updates.

5. In December, TOSSD Task Force members held a first discussion on possible TOSSD governance arrangements. There was strong support for situating the "political home" of TOSSD within the United Nations system and designating the OECD as the main "implementer" of the system e.g. the institution in charge of collecting, aggregating and presenting TOSSD data drawing on regional data collection "hubs" to which different provider countries would report. The following governance architecture was proposed[2]:

- A high-level, political "general assembly"-like forum or gathering within the UN system that would meet when necessary/appropriate e.g. to take decisions on major changes to the TOSSD framework; to endorse significant changes to the Reporting Instructions; to negotiate key partnerships within and beyond the UN system to allow for efficient transmission of TOSSD data and analysis to other parts of the UN system (including SDG monitoring processes); to provide strategic direction to the Steering-cum-technical Committee (see below) and mandate specific work by this Committee to be carried out in furtherance of international commitments and/or needs; to review quality assessments of TOSSD data and if needed to mandate work to improve data quality;

- A Steering-cum-technical Committee composed of a limited number of members representing all stakeholder groups (e.g. the statistical and development communities, Northern and Southern countries, emerging and traditional provider countries, lead multilateral institutions and development banks), to provide direction and feedback on technical issues;

- A Secretariat supporting the organisation of the meetings of the general assembly and the work of the Steering Committee in operationalising TOSSD and maintaining the statistical framework.

III.   POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR A UN "HOME" FOR TOSSD GOVERNANCE

6. The two UN bodies that would seem to align well with the statistical and political needs of the TOSSD governance framework are the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The following bullets briefly describe how their remit "fits" with TOSSD governance.

- The **United Nations Statistical Commission** (UNSC) promotes international statistical standards and, in that regard, plays a role in evaluating and vetting standards. However, it is not involved in follow-up implementation activities. The UNSC has created two subsidiary bodies in connection with efforts to establish a monitoring framework for the SDGs (the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs or the IAEG-SDG) and to harness the data revolution to achieve the SDGs (the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data or GPSDD). Could either of these subsidiary bodies be associated with TOSSD governance? Could a new subsidiary body be proposed for TOSSD? Might informal meetings of the TOSSD Steering

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[2] Members also identified a "technical group" working alongside the Secretariat.   This has not been retained in view of cost and efficiency considerations.

Committee take place on the margins of UNSC annual meetings to facilitate active engagement by international statistical experts in maintaining the TOSSD standard?

- The **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** is an important decision-making organ of the UN system to which many UN bodies have operational and political linkages. ECOSOC's Annual Ministerial Review and Development Co-operation Forum (DCF) ensure a comprehensive, qualitative review of progress in implementing the SDGs, and its Committee for Development Policy (CDP) advises ECOSOC on i) a wide array of emerging economic, social and environmental issues that are relevant to the Sustainable Development Agenda and ii) ways of strengthening international development co-operation in that regard. Would it be appropriate and possible i) for a link with ECOSOC to be established e.g. have ECOSOC endorse the TOSSD statistical standard, and ii) to explore the scope for linking TOSSD governance with the DCF or CDP?

7.   Two other UN bodies that would seem relevant to consider in this context are the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the statistical bodies of the United Nations Regional Commissions. In any case, they could be potential data hubs and possible partners with OECD regarding implementation of the TOSSD statistical framework.

- The **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development** (UNCTAD) is the principal organ of the United Nations General Assembly dealing with trade, finance, investment, technology and development issues in developing countries. UNCTAD tracks and analyses international trade and investment flows and related policy issues and has operative linkages with the South-South development co-operation community. UNCTAD has a large statistical footprint in terms of collecting data in its areas of focus and strengthening statistical capacity in developing countries.

- The **United Nations Regional Commissions' statistical bodies** have actively engaged in work to monitor progress towards SDG targets through co-ordination and methodological work. For example, the statistical body for the UN's Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), has developed a roadmap for setting up reporting on SDGs in the UNECE region, established guidance on measuring sustainable development and promoted capacity-building for reporting on SDG progress. The Statistical Conference of the Americas of UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and its Statistical coordination group for 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean is coordinating the process of preparing and implementing regional indicators and fostering relevant statistical capacity building in the region. Given that these bodies have direct links with national statisticians, could they be suitable as reference bodies for example with a seat in the TOSSD Steering-cum-technical committee of the TOSSD statistical framework?

Issues for discussion

- *Are Task Force members in agreement with the proposed governance architecture in paragraph 5?*

- *Which UN institutional option(s) seem to align best with the statistical and political needs of the TOSSD governance framework? Which are the most feasible to achieve? What would be the most effective route for soliciting their engagement?*

- *The impetus for action in the UN setting must come from UN member states. Which Task Force members would be willing to be "TOSSD champions" in this regard?*