# Executive Board

**Two hundred and first session**

# 201 EX/12

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## REPORT BY THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR STATISTICS (UIS) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INSTITUTE

### SUMMARY

The document is prepared in accordance with Article V.1 (e) of the Statutes of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (30 C/Resolution 44) and 199 EX/Decision 9. The financial and administrative implications of the reported activities fall within the parameters of the current C/5 document.

Action expected of the Executive Board: Proposed decision in paragraph 41.

**INTRODUCTION**

1.     The remit of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is to provide statistical information to inform decision-making in Member States and international organizations and to facilitate evidence-based debate in UNESCO's areas of competence. This report summarises the main activities of the Institute since the last report to the UNESCO Executive Board in April 2016. Further details can be provided upon request.

**UIS LEADERSHIP IN SDG MEASUREMENT AGENDA DESPITE CRITICAL FUNDING GAP**

2.     The Institute faces a critical juncture for its immediate and long-term future. On one side, the entire international development community is relying on the UIS to develop the technical tools and political consensus needed to help countries respond to the unprecedented demand for more and better data for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the field of education. At the same time, the Institute is faced with severe budgetary constraints despite the fact that international development community depends on UIS data for its products and initiatives.

3.     The funding situation is critical. Since 2010, the UIS managed to sustain chronic deficits by relying on its Fund Reserve, which fell from US $11.0 million at the beginning of the 2010/2011 biennium to $4.2 million at the beginning of the 2016/2017 biennium.

4.     To survive, all UIS efforts have been focussed on: showing leadership and proven results with its expanded mandate to serve as the official data source for the global education SDG and for key SDG targets in science, culture and communication; expanding its donor base; and restructuring the Institute's internal and external working relations and partnerships.

5.     As the lead agency responsible for measuring progress towards the achievement of SDG 4, the UIS is developing the methodologies and standards needed to produce the global and thematic indicators, while working with countries to help them implement the indicator frameworks. Clearly, no single organization can provide all of the data, so the UIS is building partnerships through initiatives such as the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), which is delivering the solutions needed by countries to use their existing learning assessment systems to measure and improve learning globally. For example, the UIS is working with partners to develop a new data quality assessment framework to help countries improve their assessment systems and the resulting data. In addition, the UIS has found a cost-efficient approach to start reporting on Indicator 4.1.1 and the percentages of children and youth reaching a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics at the end of primary and lower secondary education.

6.     While breaking new ground in methodology, the UIS is also addressing the practical challenges in producing the indicators, notably by co-chairing the Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) on SDG 4-Education 2030 Indicators, which includes representatives of Member States, multilateral agencies and civil society groups. Drawing on UIS technical briefs and input from initiatives like GAML, the TCG makes recommendations to the Education 2030 Steering Committee and provides inputs to inform UIS methodological work, especially in relation to the needs and priorities of countries. Following a UIS-led consultation, the TCG reviewed the global and thematic indicators and identified 29 that can be used to start monitoring progress in 2017 and another 14 that will require further development.

7.     The UIS is recognized as a leader in setting the agenda for SDG measurement across the UN, especially in the field of education. Under the aegis of the Inter-Agency Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (IAEG-SDGs), the UIS successfully negotiated a common position across the United Nations on the SDG 4 global indicators.

8.     While serving on some 30 inter-agency statistical groups, the UIS has also launched several of its own initiatives as part of its mandate and leadership in global and thematic monitoring of SDG 4. A key example is the Inter-Agency Group on Education Inequality Indicators, which the UIS

established with partners to set the standards across the United Nations system to report and interpret household survey data as part of measurement efforts to help ensure the universal right to education.

9.      In the field of science, the UIS is the only statistical agency to collect data on research and experimental development (R&D) and innovation for countries at all stages of development. Therefore, the UIS is responsible for monitoring a key target of SDG 9 while also developing a list of possible thematic indicators on science, technology and innovation (STI) that could be used by Member States. In addition, the UIS is working with countries to develop a new set of indicators on the factors and policies shaping the careers of women in science, which will contribute to the monitoring of several SDG targets related to gender equality.

10.    In the field of culture, the UIS is developing new statistics on cultural heritage to support the monitoring of SDG Target 11.4. In addition, the Institute is developing a list of possible thematic indicators to better inform countries on the contribution of culture to sustainable development.

11.    In the field of communication, two UIS indicators on ICT in education are used to monitor SDG 4. Target 4a includes the proportion of schools with access to the Internet and computers for pedagogical purposes.

## EDUCATION STATISTICS

12.    The entire international education community – from Member States to United Nations agencies and advocacy groups – relies on the UIS global education database, which is the most comprehensive in the world. As scheduled, the UIS issued two major data releases in 2016, which included more than 2,000 variables and indicators, historical time series and regional averages on a range of issues related to: access, participation and completion of all levels of education; learning outcomes, equity and teachers; literacy and attainment; education financing; school resources and teaching in Africa, etc. In addition, the UIS provided customized data tables and analysis to all key clients, such as the GEM Report, OECD, UNICEF, UNDP, the UN Statistics Division (UNSD) and the World Bank, among others. All of these partners depend on UIS data and analysis for their flagship publications.

13.    In a short time and with no additional resources, the UIS has made significant progress in developing the SDG 4 indicator framework, producing or compiling the data for many indicators, while identifying potential external data sources and partners with whom to collaborate. Over the past year, new UIS indicators have included: participation rate in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age; upper secondary out-of-school rates and numbers; completion rates for primary and secondary education; disparities in teacher's training, deployment, characteristics and working conditions at sub-national level in East and South West Asia; participation rates in vocational education; qualified teachers; over-age-for-grade children and adolescents; entry rates to tertiary education, learning outcomes and equity, and the percentage of adults participating in formal education.

14.    The UIS produced the first report in a new series, entitled *Sustainable Development Data Digest: Laying the Foundation to Measure Sustainable Development Goal 4.* Based on national findings, the report discusses current priorities and emerging challenges for Member States, as well as the UIS vision on how to implement the new measurement agenda. This report builds on a number of other UIS outputs, such as a series of regional surveys on country readiness to monitor the SDGs.

15.    To widely promote the use of SDG 4 data, the UIS has released a new data platform that features the available indicators, metadata and definitions. The data have also been integrated across the UIS website, with a range of tools designed to meet the specific needs of users. For example, the new eAtlas for Education 2030 presents a series of interactive maps organized by

SDG 4 target and bringing together a range of data sources on access to education, the quality of education on offer and learning outcomes.

16.    The UIS also produced a series of policy papers on priority issues, such as out-of-school children, literacy and teachers. To reach wider audiences, these papers are accompanied by infographics and interactive maps and charts through the UIS eAtlas series.

17.    In partnership with the IIEP, the UIS completed a project funded by the Global Partnership for Education to improve the completeness and quality of education finance data in eight countries. It included extensive capacity building to help countries produce their own national reports using a new methodological guide on National Education Accounts. In addition, the UIS and IIEP published a report, entitled Who Pays for What in Education, which presented the main results of the project.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

18.    In May 2016, the UIS launched the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML), an umbrella initiative to monitor and track progress towards all learning-related Education 2030 targets. The work on learning outcomes encompasses a highly technical and political process, requiring significant consensus building among stakeholders. While the discussions can be challenging, the UIS is clearly respected for its expertise and neutrality.

19.    Through GAML, the UIS is working with the Australian Council for Educational Research to develop an international code of practices and a data quality framework for learning assessments. This framework will help countries benchmark their national assessments to a common scale for reporting and identify capacity-building needs.

20.    Technical work is also underway to develop a reporting scale to lay the basis for internationally comparable data, related to: Target 4.1 minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics; Target 4.4 information and communication technology skills; Target 4.6 literacy and numeracy skills; and Target 4.7 global citizenship and sustainable development.

21.    The UIS has continued to expand the scope and geographic coverage of the Catalogue and Database of Learning Assessments, which is the only central repository of data on learning assessments and includes information on all system-level large-scale assessments in primary and lower secondary education, including public examinations and national learning assessments. The UIS has also developed the Learning Assessment Capacity Index, which reflects the readiness of countries to monitor learning outcomes globally.

22.    The UIS has also worked with assessment organizations and donors to reach consensus on good practices in the design and use of oral reading assessments. The results are presented in an eBook, Understanding What Works in Oral Reading Assessments.

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (STI) STATISTICS

23.    The UIS released results of its annual R&D survey and biennial innovation survey. The data were submitted for inclusion in the annual SDG report, the *World Social Sciences Report* and the *Global Innovation Index*. In addition, the UIS produced an interactive tool showing the extent to which countries are investing in R&D.

24.    The UIS continues work to revise key standards, such as the "1978 Recommendation concerning the International Standardization on Science and Technology" which will be the subject of a global consultation in 2017. The UIS also played a key role in the revision of the *Oslo Manual* on measuring innovation by ensuring it properly reflects the contexts of developing countries.

25.    With the support of the Swedish Government, the UIS is developing new indicators and methodologies to better monitor the status of women in science, technology, engineering and

mathematics in a joint project with UNESCO Headquarters and UNESCO Montevideo. The UIS has made considerable progress in developing a toolkit of instruments to better measure gender equality in STEM, which will be tested in different countries.

## CULTURE STATISTICS

26.     The UIS released results from its first global survey of cultural employment statistics. The challenge lies in helping countries to collect the raw data needed to calculate the indicators.

27.     The UIS produced a major report, _The Globalisation of Cultural Trade,_ while also contributing data and analysis to UNESCO's first global report on the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

28.     The Institute is supporting the work of UNESCO's Intercultural Dialogue Section by conducting a one-time survey among Member States on selected issues, which will be used to produce an analytical report and guide the future activities and policies of UNESCO in this area.

## MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS STATISTICS

29.     Due to budgetary constraints, the UIS has been forced to suspend its media survey. Work is under way to collect data on access to ICT in education in Latin America and to develop a global toolkit to help countries measure the use of these technologies for teaching and learning.

## DATA DISSEMINATION

30.     In December 2016, the UIS launched a new website that represents a radical shift in the presentation of UIS data and products. Rather than sending visitors to complex databases, the new site focuses on the type of information that people want, particularly in relation to the SDGs, packaged in ways that are most useful for them. To promote these products, the UIS has started its own Twitter account and blog entitled, Data for Sustainable Development.

## ADDRESSING THE URGENT FUNDING SITUATION

31.     To maintain the current level of operations in the 2016-2017 biennium, the UIS requires $24 million. Yet the Institute currently faces a projected gap of about $3 million. The Institute's general income for 2016, estimated on 30 September 2016, amounted to about $10.4 million, including the UNESCO annual allocation of $3.8 million. This represents a decrease of approximately $1.3 million (or about - 12%) as compared to the 2015 actual income of nearly $11.7 million.

32.     As of 2016, the World Bank discontinued its Development Grant Facility, which used to provide the Institute with about $1.5 million per year in core funding for education statistics. The funding cut has a considerable impact on the work of the Institute.

33.     Another major funding agreement with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) also ended in 2016 following an overall review of the donor's funding strategy. Collaboration continues in key areas, and it is hoped that a funding solution can be found.

34.     On a positive front, the Institute's longstanding donors, the Governments of Australia, Canada and Quebec, Norway and the United Kingdom, continue to provide generous support. The UK Government has increased funding for learning outcomes, while the Australian Government is also providing technical support in this area.

35.     Overall, the UIS has demonstrated its leadership and efficiency in meeting the demands of the SDGs. However, the Institute is literally "running on empty". About 58% of UIS staff are on

short-term contracts. Usually, contracts are renewed on an annual basis but, due to the difficult financial situation, the duration of staff contracts had to be reduced to four months. The consequences are alarming. At the end of April 2017, the UIS risks losing a considerable proportion of its most precious resource – an international team applying the highest professional standards.

## UIS REFORM TO RESPOND TO THE SDGs CHALLENGES

36. *Revised Medium-Term Strategy*: The UIS has developed a new Medium-Term Strategy, (MTS) based on an evaluation of all UIS activities and products – from data collection systems and databases to the UIS website and analytical reports. The MTS was recently approved by the UIS Governing Board and is submitted to the Executive Board for its consideration (document 201 EX/13).

37. *Internal reorganization*: The UIS has undergone a major restructuring process to align the specific expertise of staff to meet the new statistical demands arising with the SDGs. The new structure will: improve data quality in every stage of production; strengthen communication between UIS, countries and other stakeholders; and lead to greater efficiency. The implementation of the new structure started on 1 January, 2017 being currently on a transition period.

38. *Capacity-Building Strategy for Member States*: The UIS has found that many countries simply cannot respond to the SDGs challenges without a significant investment in statistical capacity building. Despite the current financial limitations, the UIS will continue to serve as the primary source of technical guidance concerning indicator calculation, questionnaire design and the resulting data. The UIS will also continue to develop the diagnostic tools needed to improve data quality and identify capacity-building needs while helping to design National Strategies for the Development of Education Statistics (NSDES) through targeted projects.

39. *UIS Global Donor Group*: the UIS created a Global Donor Group to expand the Institute's pool of supporters and create a multiyear framework to ensure the sustainability of its work. The UIS is also evaluating its global positioning, fundraising strategy, as well as its regional approaches to build partnerships.

40. Furthermore, consultations between the UIS and UNESCO Headquarters are ongoing, both on programmatic and administrative issues, to support the UIS in its reform and jointly address the funding crisis, including through resource mobilization, with the aim to enable the Institute to play the fundamental role it is called upon in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to the benefit of all the programmes of the Organization. In order to strengthen assistance to UIS and ensure that it is positioned to deliver on its strategic mandate, the Director-General sent a senior-level mission to UIS on 8-9 March 2017. Led by the Director of BSP with staff from ED, HRM, BFM and IOS, the mission focused on the funding, staffing, enhanced cooperation with Headquarters and the future of the Institute in a changing environment.

## PROPOSED DECISION

41. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling Article V.1 (e) of the Statutes of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (30 C/Resolution 44), 199 EX/Decision 9, and 200 EX/Decision 13.IV,

2. Having examined document 201 EX/12 containing the report by the UIS Governing Board on the activities of the Institute since April 2016,

3.  <u>Takes note</u> of the achievements of the Institute over the past months and the fact that financial and administrative implications clearly fall within the parameters of the current C/5 document;

4.  <u>Welcomes</u> the efforts of the UIS to broaden its donor base and <u>calls on</u> Member States to increase their financial support to the Institute;

5.  <u>Further welcomes</u> the information provided by the Director-General concerning the enhanced support to, and cooperation with the UIS, and <u>requests</u> her to pursue these efforts, in particular as relates to the overall positioning of the Institute in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and as concerns the resource mobilization of UIS as part of the comprehensive resource mobilization strategy;

6.  <u>Invites</u> the Director-General to continue to be guided by the recommendations made by the UIS Governing Board;

7.  <u>Further invites</u> the UIS Governing Board to report to it at its 204th session.