

Friends of Chair Group on Economic Statistics

- **United Nations Statistics Division**
- **High-Level Seminar on the Future of Economic Statistics in the Arab Region**
- **21-22 January 2020, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

New Economics for Sustainable Development

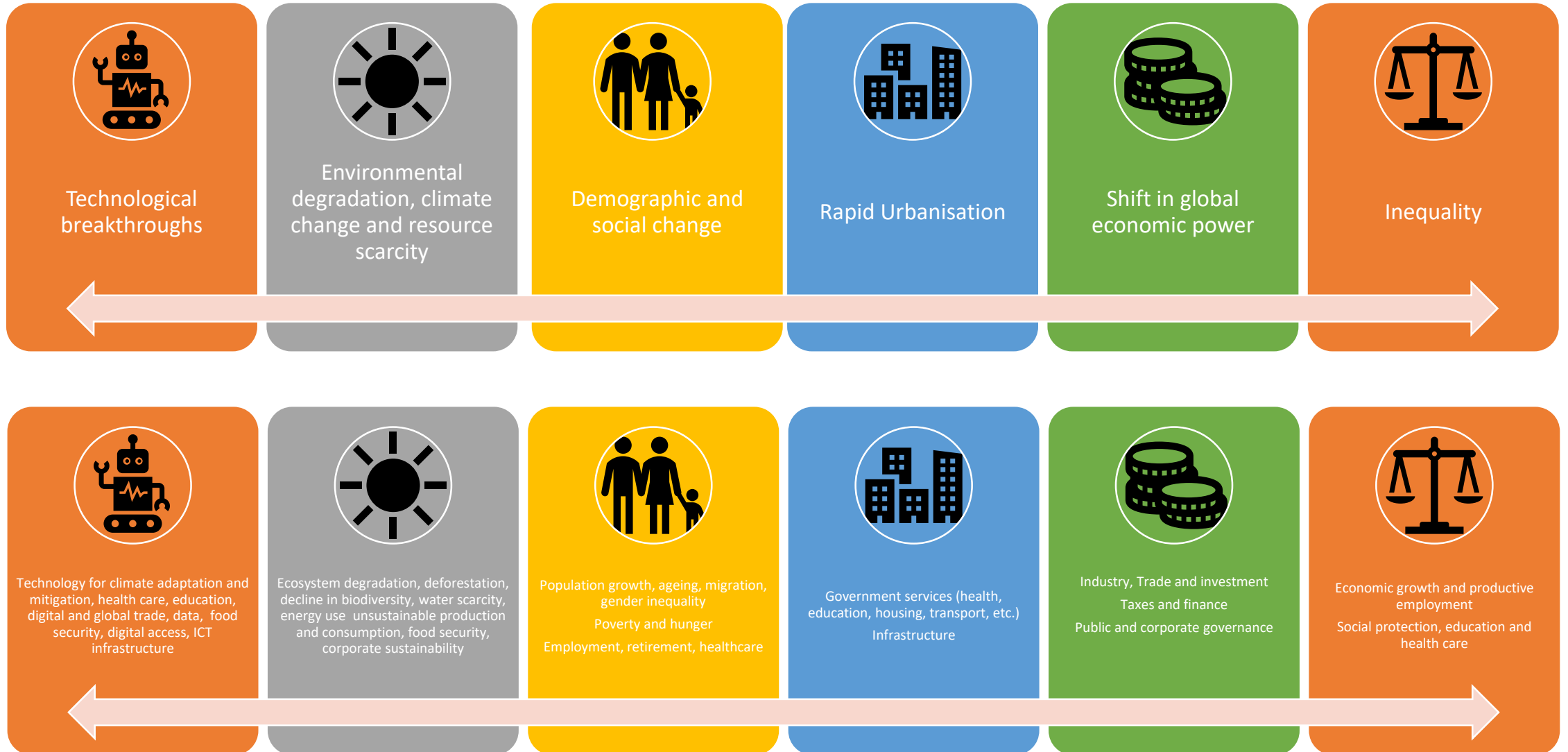


Need economic policies that support the 2030 Agenda and SDG goals

UN has established a Network of Economists to provide leadership

New economic measurement to support this policy development and implementation

Managing Global Trends for Sustainable Development



Update of the System of Economic Statistics



New Economics for Sustainable Development

The 50th Session of the Statistical Commission recognized the need for a broad review of economic statistics driven by:

- an urgent update to address the economic, social and environmental nexus if we are to truly depict and attain the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind, and having meaningful SDGs
- an urgent need for an institutional update whereby statistical agencies are transforming from principal producers of statistics to stewards of an evolving and complex data landscape
- the urgent need to revisit and transform some of our long held practices to meet the needs of policy makers and citizens

With the aim of ensuring a relevant, responsive and robust system of economic measurement



Statistical update

Urgent update to address the economic, social and environmental nexus if we are to truly depict and attain the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind, and having meaningful SDGs. This requires statistical agencies to:

- Maintain a coherent and consistent system of economic measures, including macroeconomic, business, trade and price statistics
- Better capture the impact of digitalization and globalization on production, consumption, employment, investment and financial flows.
- Move beyond GDP to include broader measures of progress including subjective measures of well-being such as life satisfaction, trust, economic insecurity, as well as measures of inequality in earnings, income, consumption and wealth and opportunity.
- Advance measurement of economic, natural, human and social capital.



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Institutional update

Urgent need for an institutional update whereby statistical agencies are transforming from principal producers of statistics to stewards of an evolving and complex data landscape.

This requires statistical agencies to:

- Institutionalize ongoing dialogue between economists and statisticians to set strategic directions
- Increase the use of alternative and big data and their integration with survey and administrative data sources to provide more detailed and timely statistics and analysis
- Increase collaboration and develop partnerships with stakeholders including the private sector and academia

Transform practice of update

Transform practices of update to be responsive to emerging data needs. This requires statistical agencies to:

- Devise more flexible and more responsive procedures for standard setting, which now take decades to develop and implement
- Take calculated risks in releasing experimental “good enough or fit for purpose” standards and related statistics and indicators that can be iterative and be implemented quickly
- Seek a country led and more integrated governance structure building on a continuous dialogue between statisticians, economists and other users

Summary - Change is Everywhere

- The phenomena we are measuring is changing
 - Digitalization, globalization etc.
- The requirements of our users are changing
 - More granularity; greater integration across broader areas of measurement
- The role of statistical agencies is changing
 - Data stewards and custodians
- Data sources are changing
 - New data, big data
- The statistical production process is changing
 - Digital revolution, ICT, machine learning



Operating with this Change



Need to become more agile and responsive

More experimentation and innovation
Improved communication and coordination
Better engagement and collaboration
Improved prioritization and heightened urgency



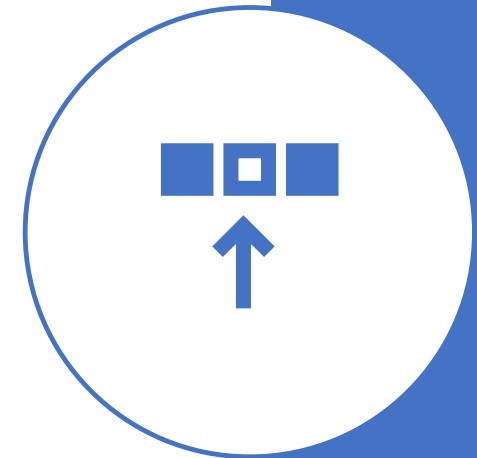
Need to do this within constraints

Work with the current system
Already committed work programs
Resourcing and capacity limits

Document the System

To improve decision making and prioritization

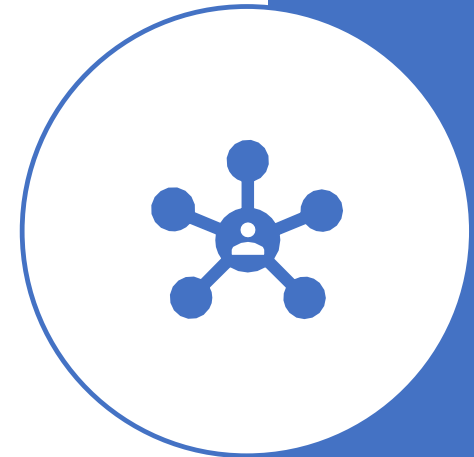
1. Continue to build the 'placemat' of existing groups
2. Produce simple descriptions of the current system operates
3. Provide clarity on roles and expectations



Network the System

To increase collaboration and coordination

1. Create a network of Chairs of existing groups
 - Include groups operating in UN system as well as those in OECD, IMF etc.
 - Chairs would have the option to join 'coalition of the willing'
2. Give the network a measurement problem to solve
 - Ideas for problems: digital platforms, MNEs, informal economy
 - Groups would work on different elements of the problem in coordinated way
3. Provide network with expected outcomes, outputs and timeframes
 - Mechanism to piloting and testing



Challenge the System

To be more innovative and nimble

1. Groups would also be expected to adopt new ways of working
 - More iteration in the development of products/outputs
 - Greater use of new technologies
 - Finding new way to balance challenges of continuity (time series) and experimentation/change



Engage the System

To be responsive and harness expertise

1. Develop communication and engagement strategy
2. Open up membership of Groups to broader range of players
3. UN Global Forum on Economic Statistics

