

# Briefing

## MEASUREMENT ASPIRATIONS OF THE HLP POST-2015 REPORT – AN ABS PERSPECTIVE

### Executive Summary

The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda establishes an overall vision, a set of five drivers, and a goal-target-indicator framework conducive to measurement, monitoring and reporting of progress in the eradication of extreme poverty through sustainable development.

A key measurement theme of the HLP Report is integration of economic, social and environmental aspects of a Post-2015 Development Agenda. The ABS supports this theme and notes that the actual drivers and the goal-target-indicator framework proposed by the HLP implicitly includes a fourth area – governance. The ABS has recently undertaken a major public consultation exercise with the Australian community, governments and business sector which strongly supported governance as an important dimension for measuring progress. The ABS notes that HLP also recognises the importance of governance to sustainable development, and the recognition of the benefits of integrating economic, social, environmental and (implicitly) governance aspects of a Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The HLP Report calls for a data revolution to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens, and recommends establishing a Global Partnership on Development Data to develop a global strategy to fill critical gaps, expand data accessibility, and galvanise international efforts to ensure a baseline of post-2015 targets is in place by January 2016. The ABS strongly supports the HLP objective of a data revolution, the three areas identified (fill gaps, expand data accessibility and galvanise international efforts), and the intensity that is evoked from the use of the word ‘revolution’

The global statistical community should play a pivotal role in shaping and influencing the data revolution. A data revolution should focus on more than just data delivery – it should also include investment in the development of concepts, measurement frameworks and classifications and standards, and recognise the importance of drawing indicators from integrated statistical systems such as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting in order to deliver indicators that are internationally coherent, consistent and comparable.

A data revolution would require significant investment in official statistical systems, including capability building, if it is to make a difference and if 2015 benchmarks are required (as proposed by the HLP). The HLP calls for a transformational shift to build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all - a well-functioning and well-resourced official statistical system is essential for government accountability. Because of this critical role of the official statistical system to government accountability, the ABS would strongly advocate that an effective official statistical system be included as a target in its own right, with an appropriate set of measures to be developed. In terms of the illustrative goals framework in the HLP report, such a target would sit readily under Goal 10 – “Ensure Good Governance and Effective Institutions”.

The (illustrative) goals and targets in the HLP are extremely ambitious from a measurement perspective, for Australia as a developed nation and even more so for developing nations (a significant number of which are in the Asia and Pacific region). The scale of effort that would be required to deliver quality measures should not be underestimated, and would differ for each of the economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions as well as by country.

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A data revolution could manifest in a number of ways. For example, a data revolution could include championing the conceptual development of the relatively new domain of governance, through to the implementation of existing conceptual frameworks such as the System of National Accounts and System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. A data revolution could also bring together the global statistical community to build on regional efforts, such as the UN Economic Commission for Europe's recent report by the Taskforce on Measuring Sustainable Development to advance statistics or the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's work to define core sets of economic and social statistics that all countries of the region will aspire to provide by 2020.

The ABS supports the idea of a global partnership on development data, and is firmly of the view that such a partnership should be led by the official statistical system under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission<sup>1</sup>. A global partnership would be a significant undertaking, and would need to be properly resourced and with appropriate governance structures in place to ensure the desired objectives of the HLP can be achieved. An early task of such a partnership would be to determine the scope of its activities. Whilst the HLP Report proposes a partnership for development data, the ABS would see benefit in a partnership for *sustainable* development data, and both human development and millennium development data efforts included in scope of the partnership's remit.

The HLP Report makes no explicit reference to existing mechanisms for improving the quality of statistics and information available to citizens, such as the leadership role of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The HLP Report also makes no explicit reference to the request from the Rio+20 conference that the United Nations Statistics Commission, in consultation with relevant United Nations system entities and other relevant organisations, launch a program of work in the area of broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decision, building on existing initiatives. The lack of explicit reference to the Rio+20 declaration mandate for the UN Statistical Commission reinforces that there is still some way to go to get the importance of official statistics to development goal measurement forefront in the minds of policy makers. The ABS would support efforts to avoid duplicative and additional coordination activities being developed and put in place from the Rio+20 conference and for a post-2015 Development Agenda.

In terms of the proposed goal-target-indicator framework articulated by the HLP report, the ABS has undertaken an analysis of the statistical themes using the integration themes (social, economy, environment and governance) and offers the following observations.

Overall, there is a hierarchy of development and maturity within the statistical system. In broad terms, the economy dimension could be considered 'gold' in terms of the level of maturity and adoption of internationally-agreed standards, frameworks, measurement tools, particularly amongst developed nations (in developing nations, economic statistics may not be as 'shiny' as for developed nations, if they are still gold in comparison to the social, environmental and governance dimensions). Society would win the 'silver' medal in terms of level of maturity and adoption of internationally-agreed standards, frameworks and measurement tools, followed by environment with 'bronze' and governance a 'tin'.

### *Economic dimension*

- The economic dimension covers common statistical themes across both macro and micro-economic issues including consumption, jobs, production, productivity, expenditure, trade and financial stability. Australia's statistical system has the capability to deliver economic data against the HLP's (illustrative) goals.

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission is the apex entity of the global statistical system, it is the highest decision making body for international statistical activities especially the setting of statistical standards, the development of concepts and methods and their implementation at the national and international level.

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- The ABS is part of a Steering Group for the Regional Programme for Economic Statistics in the Asia and Pacific region, and is able to report that the themes of the HLP report are consistent with those where countries in Asia and the Pacific want to improve capacity and capability. ABS is actively engaged in activities to build capacity and capability currently (for example in Indonesia), however further work needs to be done.

### *Society dimension*

- The society dimension covers the common statistical themes of demography, health, education and training, vitals, income, as well as disaggregations such as age, gender, geography, disability and ethnicity. The theme also covers access to services such as education, healthcare, clean water, electricity and telecommunications. Universal human rights and freedom from fear and conflict are other themes. Note that subjective wellbeing, such as life satisfaction, and social capital, such as relationships and connections are not explicit in the HLP report. Australia's statistical system has the capability to deliver population and social data against the HLP's (illustrative) goals, though on various frequencies and with varying quality for disaggregations.
- The ABS is co-chair of a Technical Advisory Group on Population and Social Statistics in the Asia and Pacific region, and in February 2013, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific endorsed a basic set of population and social statistics to guide capacity and capability development in the region. The themes of the HLP report are consistent with those endorsed by the Commission. However, much work needs to be done for nations in Asia and the Pacific to be able to deliver statistics in these areas as there are significant challenges still to be overcome in many smaller and developing nations in the ESCAP region to create a robust social statistics system beyond Population Census activities.

### *Environment dimension*

- The environment dimension covers common environmental themes of water, energy, biodiversity, management of natural resources, and climate. The environment dimension includes both biophysical measures (such as water quality) as well as statistical measures (such as water use). These statistical and biophysical themes are under various stages of development in Australia, with many of the issues and challenges of reporting on biophysical themes highlighted in the Sustainable Australia Report 2013 and in the 2011 State of the Environment report. Australia has the capability to deliver environmental statistics against a substantial number of the HLP's (illustrative) goals but is currently underinvested to do so. Australia is currently developing and implementing a National Plan for Environmental Information to improve the quality and coverage of environmental information in Australia and efforts are being made to extend it past just biophysical measures.
- There is currently no Technical Advisory Group on Environment Statistics in Asia and Pacific region. However, ABS understanding of the state of environment statistics in Asia and the Pacific region is that there would be considerable development needed. The ABS has received funding to build the capacity of Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia to produce environmental accounts aligned with the WAVES partnership over the next three years.

### *Governance dimension*

- The governance dimension covers themes such as accountability, peace, rule of law, freedom of speech and media, access to justice, partnerships, and corruption. These themes are consistent with those under development in Australia for Measures of Australia's Progress. Australia's statistical system has the capability to deliver governance-related data against the HLP's (illustrative) goals but is not currently resourced to do so.
- The Technical Advisory Group on Population and Social Statistics in Asia and the Pacific have included governance in scope of their deliberations. The ABS is able to report that, like Australia, governance is an area in need of considerable statistical attention and development in Asia and the Pacific region.

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- There is considerable work to be done by the statistical community to develop concepts, measurement tools, and put in place statistical programs to meet information needs in the area of governance, and there is currently no mechanism in the global statistical community for bringing together a program of work similar to that which is done for economic statistics, social statistics, and environment statistics. A particular issue in the area of governance is the current lack of statistics produced by National Statistical Offices in this area, and therefore by default, the use of non-official sources such as the World Gallop Poll. The quality of these non-official sources will increasingly become an issue with heightened levels of international transparency and scrutiny. The global statistical community may wish to learn from past lessons with initiatives such as the Human Development Report, and take an active role early on to shape and influence the quality and integrity of data sources for the governance dimension of the HLP's (illustrative) goals.

The ABS supports the HLP recommendation for an independent and rigorous monitoring system. Furthermore, it commends the HLP suggestion to make use of the UN's five regional commissions as part of coordinating mechanisms.

The ABS notes the HLP support for the UN's System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the World Bank's Wealth Accounting and Valuation to Ecosystem Services (WAVES). ABS played a leading role in the development of the UN's System of Environmental-Economic Accounts and their role in measuring the impact of not only governments and businesses, but also society on sustainable development. The ABS is now playing a leading role in the implementation of SEEA both within Australia's environment statistics program as well as the Asia and Pacific region.

The ABS supports the HLP suggestion to identify a single locus of accountability for the post-2015 agenda and strongly encourages the United Nations Statistical Commission be a critical partner in this arrangement.

The HLP has identified seven cross-cutting themes (peace, inequality, climate change, cities, youth, girls and women, and sustainable consumption and production). Whilst the HLP only refers to a single Global Sustainable Development Outlook, thematic based reports are also common throughout the United Nations system. It is conceivable that thematic based outlooks, such as a Global Sustainable Development Outlook on women, peace, climate change or inequality may also be produced. A thematic approach would put additional pressure on statistical systems to produce a core set of statistical outputs for each of these population groups or themes.

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## Background

The UN Secretary-General appointed a High Level Panel of Eminent Persons (HLP) in July 2012 to advise him on the post-2015 Development Agenda. The panel's co-chairs are the UK Prime Minister Cameron, Indonesian President Yudhoyono, and Liberian President Johnson-Sirleaf. The other 24 members are from a mix of government, civil society and the private sector in developed and developing countries.

The HLP released its report on 30 May 2013. The report makes a contribution to international discussions on the post-2015 Development Agenda. The report centres on eradicating extreme poverty and transforming economies by 2030 through sustainable development, building on the spirit and best of the MDG Agenda and the Rio+20 process.

The HLP broadens the MDG Agenda into addressing the very poorest, the most excluded, the effects of conflict on development, good governance and institutions that guarantee the rule of law, free speech and open and accountable government, inclusive growth to provide jobs, integrating the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development, and sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Australia is currently developing its whole of government position on the post-2015 Development Agenda. Australia has signalled it wants to see a global development agenda that prioritises poverty eradication through a sustainable development path, and builds on the strengths of the MDGs and Rio+20.

ABS supports the development of a robust measurement framework for any emerging post-2015 development and post-Rio+20 agenda. The ABS is internationally recognised as a leader amongst statistical agencies, and has strong and productive professional relationships with the global statistical community. In particular, ABS has strong and productive relationships with national statistical offices in the tripartite seat Australia shares on the Open Working Group (Netherlands and United Kingdom) that is taking forward the Rio+20 outcomes, and is also an active leader and participates in efforts to build measurement capacity and capability within the Asia and Pacific region.

## General themes identified by the HLP – a measurement perspective

The HLP articulates a set of five 'big transformative shifts' (also referred to as drivers, objectives and priorities) to drive the post-2015 agenda. The HLP then offers a set of illustrative goals and targets to show how the transformative changes could be expressed in precise and measurable terms.

A major measurement theme of the HLP is integration of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. This theme is central to the second transformative objective (put sustainable development at the core) and is also expressed in the context of mobilizing social, economic and environmental action together to eradicate poverty irreversibly. "The scope of the post-2015 agenda is so broad – blending social progress, equitable growth and environmental management". (HLP 2013:13)

### *Transformational Shifts (drivers, objectives, priorities)*

The HLP concludes that the post-2015 Development Agenda should be a universal agenda driven by five big transformational shifts to achieve the objective of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 through a "universal, people-centered and planet-sensitive development agenda" (HLP, 2013:28).

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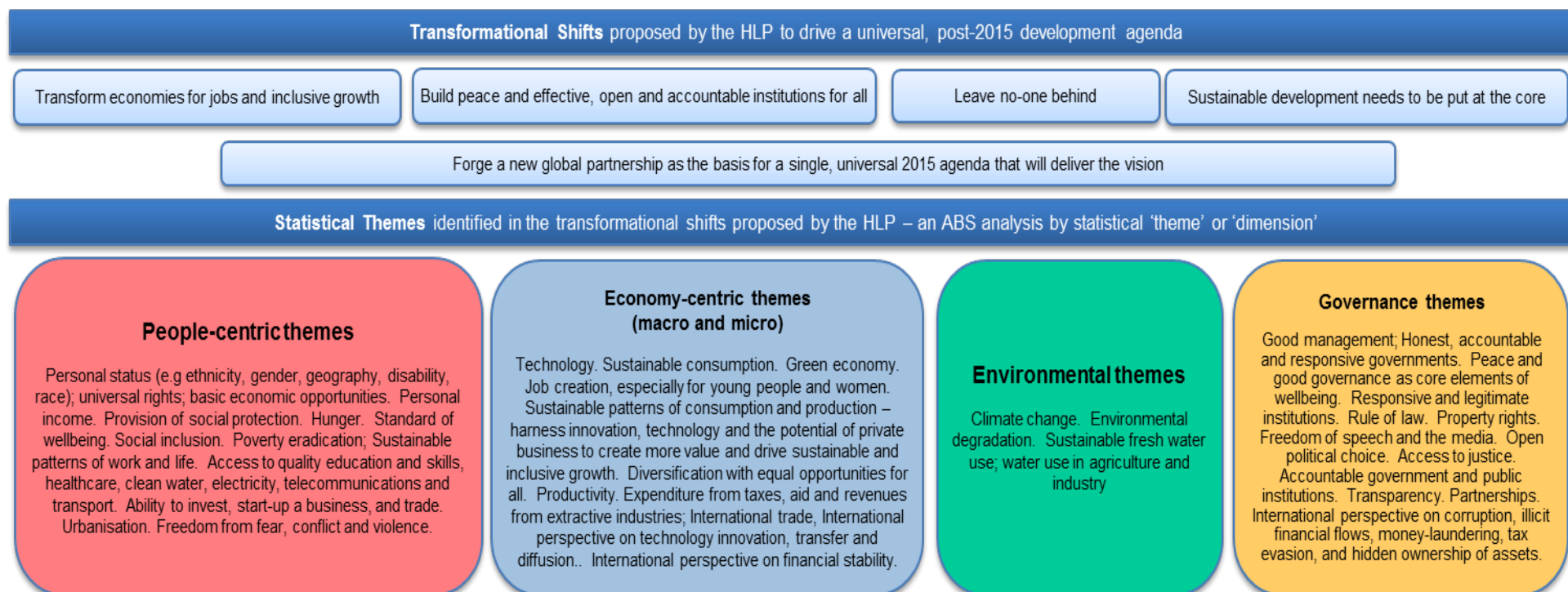
These shifts or drivers are:

1. **Leave no-one behind** – “to give every child a fair chance in life, and to achieve a pattern of development where dignity and human rights become a reality for all, where an agenda can be built around human security.”
2. **Sustainable development** needs to be put at the core
3. **Transform economies** for jobs and inclusive growth – “so that growth is sustained over the long term and provides more good jobs and secure livelihoods.”
4. Build peace and **effective, open and accountable institutions** for all
5. Forge a new **global partnership** as a basis for a single, universal 2015 agenda that will deliver the vision – “bringing together the many groups in the world concerned with economic, social and environmental progress”.

Diagram 1 illustrates the measurement themes in the HLP’s description of these transformational shifts. The measurement themes have been grouped by the four dimensions of society, economy, environment and governance to demonstrate the breadth of the measurement challenge presented by the HLP and the recognition the HLP gives to social-economic-environmental integration.

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**Diagram 1: Statistical themes identified in the transformational shifts proposed by the HLP – an ABS analysis by statistical dimension**



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### *A goal-target-indicator framework*

The HLP offers a set of illustrative goals and targets to show how the transformative changes could be expressed in precise and measurable terms. There are 12 universal (illustrative) goals and 54 focused and quantitatively measurable targets.

The universal (illustrative) goals are:

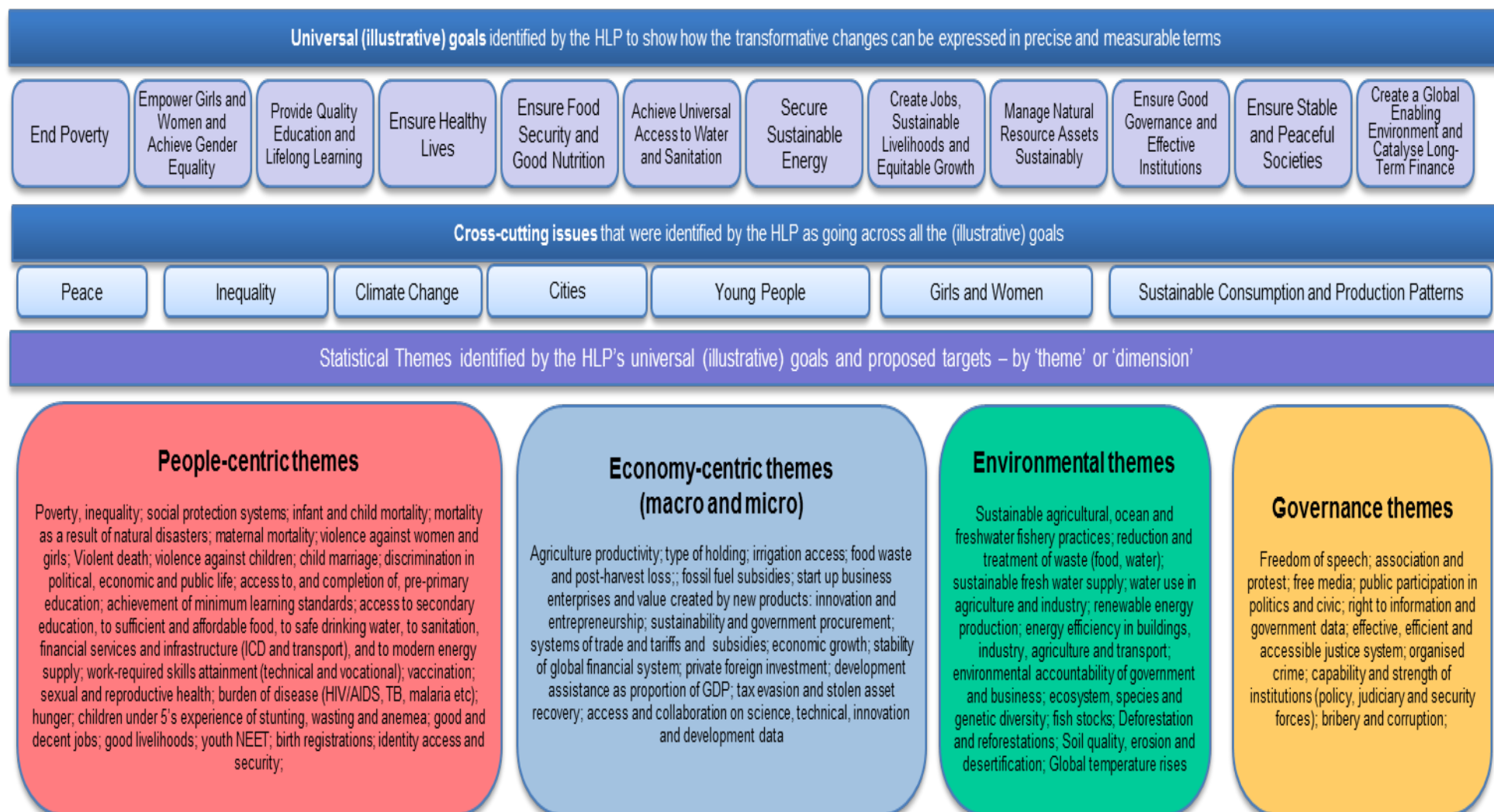
1. End Poverty
2. Empower Girls and Women and Achieve Gender Equality
3. Provide Quality Education and Lifelong Learning
4. Ensure Healthy Lives
5. Ensure Food Security and Good Nutrition
6. Achieve Universal Access to Water and Sanitation
7. Secure Sustainable Energy
8. Create Jobs, Sustainable Livelihoods, and Equitable Growth
9. Manage Natural Resource Assets Sustainably
10. Ensure Good Governance and Effective Institutions
11. Ensure Stable and Peaceful Societies
12. Create a Global Enabling Environment and Catalyse Long-Term Finance

Diagram 2 illustrates the measurement themes in the HLP's description of the (illustrative) goals. The measurement themes have again been grouped by the four dimensions of society, economy, environment and governance used by the ABS to measure progress, to demonstrate the breadth of the measurement perspective presented by the HLP and the recognition the HLP gives to social-economic-environmental integration.



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**Diagram 2: Measurement themes in the HLP’s universal (illustrative) goals**



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### *Cross-cutting issues*

In addition to articulating five transformative shifts (or drivers) and a goal-target-indicator framework, the HLP recognises that several issues are not directly addressed through a single goal, but are treated in many of them (HLP 2013:16). The HLP identifies seven cross-cutting issues across the goals. The seven cross-cutting issues are:

1. Peace
2. Inequality
3. Climate Change
4. Cities
5. Young People
6. Girls and Women
7. Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

### **ABS views on the capability of the statistical system to measure the proposed goals and targets**

As diagram two demonstrates, a key measurement theme of the HLP Report is integration of economic, social and environmental aspects of a post-2015 Development Agenda. Whilst the HLP Report itself only refers to the commonly used three pillars of economic, social and environmental, the ABS notes that HLP also recognises the importance of governance to sustainable development, and the recognition of the benefits of integrating economic, social, environmental and (implicitly) governance aspects of a Post-2015 Development Agenda.

In terms of the proposed goal-target-indicator framework articulated by the HLP report, the ABS has undertaken an analysis of the statistical themes using the integration themes (social, economy, environment and governance) and offers the following observations.

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#### *Economic dimension*

- The economic dimension covers common statistical themes across both macro and micro-economic issues including consumption, jobs, production, productivity, expenditure, trade and financial stability. Australia’s statistical system has the capability to deliver economic data against the HLP’s (illustrative) goals.
- The ABS is part of a Steering Group for the Regional Programme for Economic Statistics in the Asia and Pacific region, and is able to report that the themes of the HLP report are consistent with those where countries in Asia and the Pacific want to improve capacity and capability. ABS is actively engaged in activities to build capacity and capability currently (for example in Indonesia), however further work needs to be done.

#### *Society dimension*

- The society dimension covers the common statistical themes of demography, health, education and training, vitals, income, as well as disaggregations such as age, gender, geography, disability and ethnicity. The theme also covers access to services such as education, healthcare, clean water, electricity and telecommunications. Universal human

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rights and freedom from fear and conflict are other themes. Note that subjective wellbeing, such as life satisfaction, and social capital, such as relationships and connections are not explicit in the HLP report. Australia's statistical system has the capability to deliver population and social data against the HLP's (illustrative) goals, though on various frequencies and with varying quality for disaggregations.

- The ABS is co-chair of a Technical Advisory Group on Population and Social Statistics in the Asia and Pacific region, and in February 2013, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific endorsed a basic set of population and social statistics to guide capacity and capability development in the region. The themes of the HLP report are consistent with those endorsed by the Commission. However, much work needs to be done for nations in Asia and the Pacific to be able to deliver statistics in these areas as there are significant challenges still to be overcome in many smaller and developing nations in the ESCAP region to create a robust social statistics system beyond Population Census activities.

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- There is currently no Technical Advisory Group on Environment Statistics in Asia and Pacific region. However, ABS understanding of the state of environment statistics in Asia and the Pacific region is that there would be considerable development needed. The ABS has received funding to build the capacity of Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia to produce environmental accounts aligned with the WAVES partnership over the next three years.

### *Governance dimension*

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- The Technical Advisory Group on Population and Social Statistics in Asia and the Pacific have included governance in scope of their deliberations. The ABS is able to report that, like Australia, governance is an area in need of considerable statistical attention and development in Asia and the Pacific region.
- There is considerable work to be done by the statistical community to develop concepts, measurement tools, and put in place statistical programs to meet information needs in the area of governance, and there is currently no mechanism in the global statistical community for bringing together a program of work similar to that which is done for economic statistics, social statistics, and environment statistics. A particular issue in the area of governance is the current lack of statistics produced by National Statistical Offices in this area, and therefore by default, the use of non-official sources such as the World Gallop Poll. The quality of these non-official sources will increasingly become an issue with heightened levels of international transparency and scrutiny. The global statistical community may wish to learn from past lessons with initiatives such as the Human Development Report, and take an active role early on to shape and influence the quality and integrity of data sources for the governance dimension of the HLP's (illustrative) goals.

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### **Relationship to Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP)**

The HLP has proposed a data revolution to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens. In 2009, the Report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress noted it is important to measure what matters, not simply what can be measured

For over a decade, measuring progress – providing information about whether life in Australia is getting better – has been a major focus for the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Ten years on from the ABS' first release of Measures of Australia's Progress, the ABS undertook a national consultation to review MAP, ensuring it remains relevant to today's society – that it measures what Australian society cares about. In November 2012, the ABS released 'Measures of Australia's Progress – aspirations for our nation: a conversation with Australians about progress'<sup>2</sup> to provide an account of the aspirations that came from the consultation.

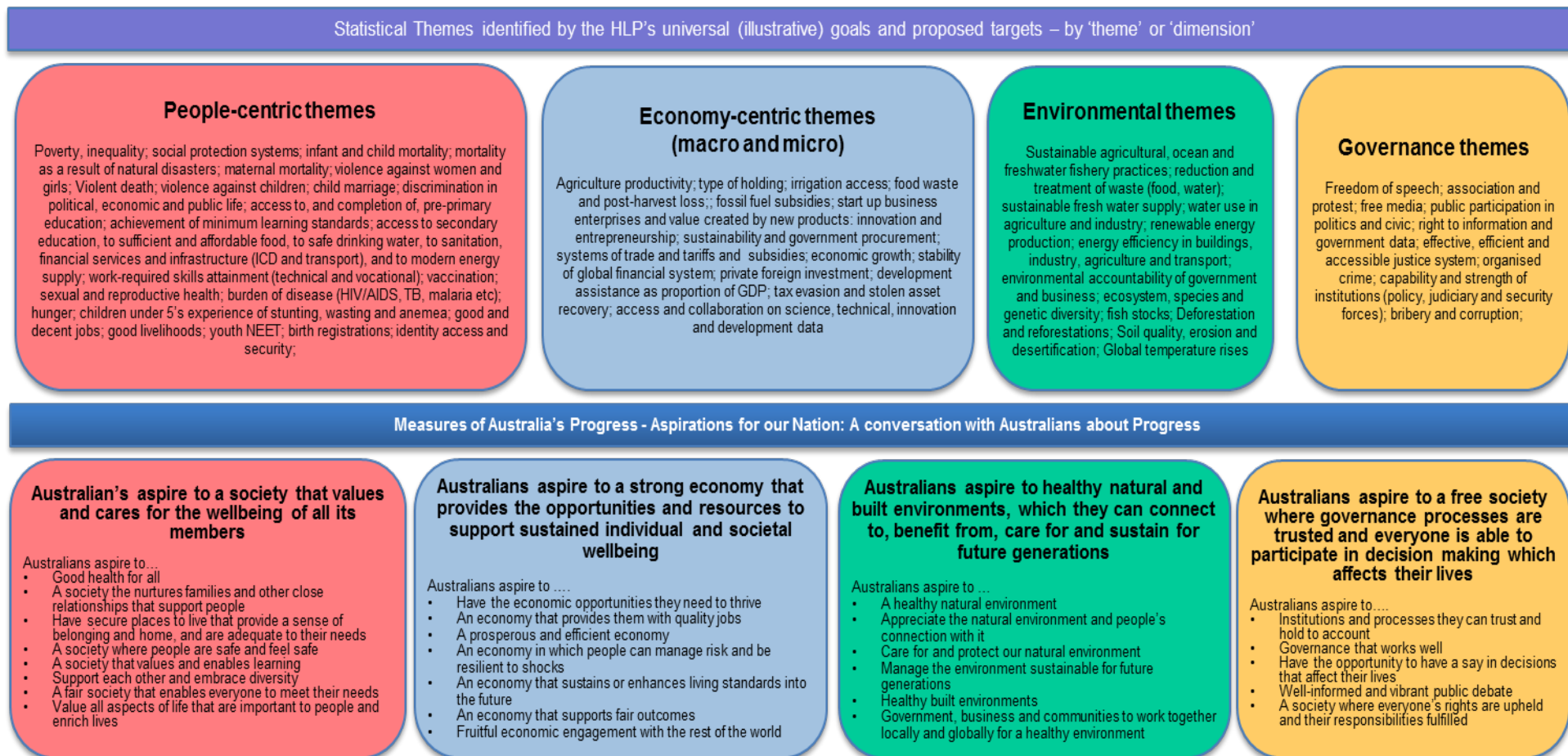
Diagram 3 illustrates the measurement themes in the HLP's description of the (illustrative) goals in conjunction with the aspirations which came from the consultation with the Australian public. There is considerable similarity between the measurement themes in the HLP report and the aspirations of Australian's for life in Australia.

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<sup>2</sup> [1370.0.00.002 - Measures of Australia's Progress - Aspirations for our Nation: A Conversation with Australians about Progress, 2012](#)

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**Diagram 3: Measurement themes in the HLP’s universal (illustrative) goals and Measures of Australia’s Progress – aspirations for our nation: a conversation with Australians about progress**



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### HLP views on ‘universal’

The HLP concludes that the **post-2015 Development Agenda** is a universal agenda.

In terms of the five identified **transformative shifts**, the HLP states that they “apply to all countries” but does not specifically dictate the actions each country should undertake. “They are universally relevant and actionable. The details may vary, and responsibilities and accountabilities will inevitably differ in line with the circumstances and capabilities of each country.” (HLP 2013:7). The HLP “recognises that there are enormous differences among countries in resources and capabilities .... But every country has something to contribute. Countries are not being told what to do: each country is being asked what it wants to do, on a voluntary basis, both at home and to help others in meeting jointly identified challenges.” (HLP 2013:7)

The HLP recognises that **goals** are not binding in international law, and refers to them as “tools of communication, inspiration, policy formulation and resource mobilisation”. (HLP 2013: 13) It calls for the goals to be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound - and to reflect what people want to achieve as outcomes, without dictating how nations should achieve those outcomes. The HLP also proposes two possible models for the adoption of goals: either all goals would be adopted by all countries, with locally identified actions, or countries could alternatively select the goals they will focus on and adopt.

In terms of metrics and targets, the HLP does seem to imply a common, shared set of globally agreed metrics but with nationally-set targets. “... because the scope of the post-2015 agenda is so broad – blending social progress, equitable growth and environmental management – it must have clear priorities, and include shared global metrics as well as national targets. It is around these that the global community can organize itself.” (HLP 2013:13) “In most cases, national targets should be set .... And in some cases, global minimum standards that apply to every individual or country should be set.” (HLP 2013:15). This model may have a range of implications for the desirability of comparability in data and adoption of standards and frameworks for key metrics.

### HLP views on data

The HLP calls for a **data revolution for sustainable development**, “with a new international initiative to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens”, signalling the importance not only of an improved global evidence base to support this work but also improved dissemination and communication of information to empower and engage citizens in the development process. This is key to building accountability for governments, consensus and support for the successful implementation of a post-2015 Development Agenda.

The HLP recommends establishing a **Global Partnership on Development Data** to, “as a first step, develop a global strategy to fill critical gaps, expand data accessibility, and galvanise international efforts to ensure a baseline of post-2015 targets is in place by January 2016.” This is a key opportunity for a strong contribution by the international statistical community to the success of the Post-2015 Agenda.

The data revolution will “improve the quality of statistics and information that is available not just to governments, but also citizens... This will empower citizens, providing them with information via exploitation of new connectivity and communications channels to collect information, engage and disseminate information. New technologies and methodologies, such as crowd sourcing will be important to achieving these goals. Governments should be ensuring their citizens have access to public information.”

“A true data revolution would draw on existing and new sources of data to fully integrate statistics into decision making, promote open access to, and use of, data and ensure increased support for

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statistical systems.” The HLP acknowledges that where “... data for indicators are not yet available, investments in data gathering will be needed. When indicators are not already agreed or are unclear (for example, in defining quality), we suggest inviting technical experts to discuss and refine their models and methods.” (HLP 2013:15).

### **ABS views on the HLP proposal regarding statistics**

The HLP Report calls for a data revolution to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens, and recommends establishing a Global Partnership on Development Data to develop a global strategy to fill critical gaps, expand data accessibility, and galvanise international efforts to ensure a baseline of post-2015 targets is in place by January 2016. The ABS strongly supports the HLP objective of a data revolution, the three areas identified (fill gaps, expand data accessibility and galvanise international efforts), and the intensity that is evoked from the use of the word ‘revolution’

The global statistical community should play a pivotal role in shaping and influencing the data revolution. A data revolution should focus on more than just data delivery – it should also include investment in the development of concepts, measurement frameworks and classifications and standards, and recognise the importance of drawing indicators from integrated statistical systems such as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting in order to deliver indicators that are internationally coherent, consistent and comparable.

A data revolution would require significant investment in official statistical systems, including capability building, if it is to make a difference and if 2015 benchmarks are required (as proposed by the HLP). The HLP calls for a transformational shift to build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all - a well-functioning and well-resourced official statistical system is essential for government accountability. Because of this critical role of the official statistical system to government accountability, the ABS would strongly advocate that an effective official statistical system be included as a target in its own right, with an appropriate set of measures to be developed. In terms of the illustrative goals framework in the HLP report, such a target would sit readily under Goal 10 – “Ensure Good Governance and Effective Institutions”.

The (illustrative) goals and targets in the HLP are extremely ambitious from a measurement perspective, for Australia as a developed nation and even more so for developing nations (the majority of which are in the Asia and Pacific region). The scale of effort that would be required to deliver quality measures should not be underestimated, and would differ for each of the economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions as well as by country.

A data revolution could manifest in a number of ways. For example, a data revolution could include championing the conceptual development of the relatively new domain of governance, through to the implementation of existing conceptual frameworks such as the System of National Accounts and System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. A data revolution could also bring together the global statistical community to build on regional efforts, such as the UN Economic Commission for Europe’s recent report by the Taskforce on Measuring Sustainable Development to advance statistics or the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific’s work to define core sets of economic and social statistics that all countries of the region will aspire to provide by 2020 .

The ABS supports the idea of a global partnership on development data, and is firmly of the view that such a partnership should be led by the official statistical system under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission<sup>3</sup>. A global partnership would be a significant undertaking, and would need to be properly resourced and with appropriate governance structures in place to ensure

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<sup>3</sup> The Commission is the apex entity of the global statistical system, it is the highest decision making body for international statistical activities especially the setting of statistical standards, the development of concepts and methods and their implementation at the national and international level.

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the desired objectives of the HLP can be achieved. An early task of such a partnership would be to determine the scope of its activities. Whilst the HLP Report proposes a partnership for development data, the ABS would see benefit in a partnership for *sustainable* development data, and both human development and millennium development data efforts included in scope of the partnership's remit.

The HLP Report makes no explicit reference to existing mechanisms for improving the quality of statistics and information available to citizens, such as the leadership role of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The HLP Report also makes no explicit reference to the request from the Rio+20 conference that the United Nations Statistics Commission, in consultation with relevant United Nations system entities and other relevant organisations, launch a program of work in the area of broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decision, building on existing initiatives. The lack of explicit reference to the Rio+20 declaration mandate for the UN Statistical Commission reinforces that there is still some way to go to get the importance of official statistics to development goal measurement forefront in the minds of policy makers. The ABS would support efforts to avoid duplicative and additional coordination activities being developed and put in place from the Rio+20 conference and for a post-2015 Development Agenda.

### Outputs and monitoring actions proposed by the HLP

The HLP report clearly recognises and proposes a monitoring process. The HLP emphasises that in order to learn from the challenges experienced in advancing the MDGs, the post-2015 Development Agenda must incorporate clear goals, with measurable targets to ensure desired outcomes are achieved and progress towards these outcomes can be monitored.

The HLP recommends that **goals** be “accompanied by an independent and rigorous monitoring system, with regular opportunities to report on progress and shortcomings at a high political level.” The “agenda should including monitoring and accountability mechanisms involving states, civil society, the private sector, foundations, and the international development community ..... It will need to be informed by evidence of what works....” (HLP 2013:13).

The HLP does not call for the **targets** to be binding, but does suggest the targets be monitored closely.

Furthermore, the HLP recommends that “The **indicators** that track the targets should be disaggregated to ensure no one is left behind and targets should only be considered ‘achieved’ if they are met for all relevant income and social groups.”

In terms of another aspect of accountability and information, the HLP notes the need for governments and businesses to account for their **impact** on sustainable development. In this regard, the HLP also proposes that , “in future – at the latest by 2030 – all large businesses should be reporting on their environmental and social impact – or explain why if they are not doing so. Similarly, governments should adopt the UN’s System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, along with the Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) introduced by the World Bank,.... These metrics can then be used to monitor national development strategies and results in a universally consistent way.” (HLP 2013:24).

The HLP makes three suggestions to “assist with a coordinated and cooperative international approach to monitoring and peer review” of the post-2015 agenda. First, the UN should identify a single locus of accountability for the post-2015 agenda. This locus could “produce a single Global Sustainable Development Outlook, jointly written every one or two years by a consortium of UN agencies and other international organisations.”. Second, the UN “should periodically convene a global forum at a high political level to review progress and challenges ahead”. The forum could be advised by an independent advisory committee. Third, “reporting and peer-review at the regional



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level could complement global monitoring”, and suggests the UN’s five regional commissions, with regional development banks, member governments and regional organisations could form part of an improved coordinating mechanism in each region, discuss and report on the sustainable development agenda in advance of the global forum.”. (HLP 2013:22).

### **ABS views on the HLP proposal regarding outputs and monitoring actions**

The ABS supports the HLP recommendation for an independent and rigorous monitoring system. Furthermore, it commends the HLP suggestion to make use of the UN’s five regional commissions as part of coordinating mechanisms.

The ABS notes the HLP support for the UN’s System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the World Bank’s Wealth Accounting and Valuation to Ecosystem Services (WAVES). ABS played a leading role in the development of the UN’s System of Environmental-Economic Accounts and their role in measuring the impact of not only governments and businesses, but also society on sustainable development. The ABS is now playing a leading role in the implementation of SEEA both within Australia’s environment statistics program as well as the Asia and Pacific region.

The ABS supports the HLP suggestion to identify a single locus of accountability for the post-2015 agenda and strongly encourages the United Nations Statistical Commission be a critical partner in this arrangement.

The HLP has identified seven cross-cutting themes (peace, inequality, climate change, cities, youth, girls and women, and sustainable consumption and production). Whilst the HLP only refers to a single Global Sustainable Development Outlook, thematic based reports are also common throughout the United Nations system. It is conceivable that thematic based outlooks, such as a Global Sustainable Development Outlook on women, peace, climate change or inequality may also be produced. A thematic approach would put additional pressure on statistical systems to produce a core set of statistical outputs for each of these population groups or themes.