OPEN LETTER TO THE CHAIR OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION AND CO-CHAIRS OF THE INTER AGENCY EXPERT GROUP ON THE SDGS.

16th February 2016

Mr. John Pullinger

Chair, UN Statistical Commission

Ms.Lisa Bersales and Mr. Enrique Ordaz,

Co-Chairs of the IAEG -SDGs

Cc: President of General Assembly, President of ECOSOC, Chair of G77 & China, Head of Delegations (EU, AU), IAEG members and Permanent Representatives of member states.

Excellencies,

Civil society and stakeholders welcome the Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. We welcome the efforts undertaken by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) that has made efforts to ensure that the principles of the SDGs are upheld, with technically and methodologically sound indicators.

At this point in the process, we would like to raise a number of important concerns that we as civil society have around the extent to which inputs from stakeholders have been taken into consideration. Whilst we have been providing inputs on a regular basis, we are concerned that there is a disconnect between our inputs and the proposed indicators. We feel that many of our contributions are not being taken into consideration and adequately reflected in the report . Moreover, the limited window of openness and transparency, compromises the final outcome and creates a real danger of reduction of the SDG targets.

Ahead of the second meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators in Bangkok, over 100 civil society organisations and stakeholders sent an open letter to the co-chairs of the IAEG-SDGs expressing our collective concerns around the lack of transparency, inclusion and participation and setting clear red lines on issues of concern to many stakeholders across the globe. Resulting from our letter, we appreciate the improvements that have been made and that the Bangkok meeting was more open for multi stakeholder engagement and seeking the views of civil society and other stakeholders.

Over the past few months, however, we have encountered three significant issues of concern to which we would like to draw your attention:

1. Transparency and inclusion – Although the President of the General Assembly’s briefing on January 28th reaffirmed the need for the upcoming processes to be fully inclusive in a meaningful way, this is not being fully realised. Our experience so far around civil society engagement and incorporation of our proposals raise questions around principles of participation, transparency and inclusion. Our experience thus far throughout the indicator process is in sharp contrast to the level of participation that led to the development of the 2030 Agenda through the Open Working Group and the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations. It is unacceptable, for example, that agreements achieved at the second meeting of the IAEG-SDGs in Bangkok were later modified without allowing further inputs and insight.

It has been recognised in the IAEG-SDGs (E/CN.3/2016/2) Para 11 - 16 that civil society and stakeholders contributions were received. However these inputs (through online questionnaires and formal submissions) were rarely taken onboard during the deliberations of the IAEG or reflected in the outcomes, without any process for feedback, explanation or consultations.

2. Regional and Thematic indicators - As mentioned in the report of the IAEG-SDGs (E/CN.3/2016/2), paragraph 23, thematic indicators have already been developed in a number of areas. Similarly, processes of development of regional indicators is also underway. Apparently, involvement of civil society and stakeholders in the development of these indicators with colleagues from different regions is patchy and leaves much to be desired.

3. Timeline for finalization of the Global Indicators - As the global indicators will form the core of and starting point for all other sets of indicators, one cannot underestimate the importance of getting this done correctly from the start. It is not just about setting the right benchmarks, but ensuring the right level of ambition is set, and that this is adequately tracked and measured. As you know, many of the ambitions reflected in the 2030 Agenda are a result of inputs, from millions of people across the world, in the Open Working Group and post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations. A reductionist agenda resulting from ignoring the civil society inputs on robust and strong indicators is not acceptable.

We also support the sentiments echoed by some Member States,putting into question the March 2016 deadline for the adoption of the global indicators. Given that a lot more work is needed, across all tiers of indicators, it would be prudent to take a few more months for meaningful multistakeholder consultations and not sacrifice quality for speed and a weak outcome.

In conclusion, we request you to consider the following:

1. Convene regular meetings of civil society and other relevant stakeholders to brief them on the state of play, with regards to the global and regional indicator development process, how various inputs have lead to substantive or marginal revisions and what opportunities are created to ensure an inclusive process
2. Ensure similar regional meetings are held with civil society in countries to get a briefing on the indicator development process at the regional level.
3. Provide clarity on the process by which decisions on the “green” indicators have been made, and “grey” indicators are going to be made, including the time frame for further development of Tier III indicators with inputs from civil society and other stakeholders.
4. Extend the time frame for the adoption from March 2016 to August 2016, still in time for the UN General Assembly discussing and adopting the final outcome.

We appreciate your efforts and hope you are able to give due consideration to our requests. For any further correspondence to this letter, please contact Savio Carvalho at Savio.Carvalho@amnesty.org or Arelys Bellorini at Arelys\_Bellorini@wvi.org .

Yours Sincerely,