

Friday Seminar on Emerging Issues

Open data:

Adding value by matching access with privacy and security

A. Introduction

With fast technological progress in generating, storing, analyzing and disseminating data, data is transforming our daily lives. This transformation has enormous potential to foster more transparent, accountable, responsive, and effective governments, and civil society and private sector organizations. This seminar will explore how under the leadership of national statistical offices and public private partnerships open data initiatives can unleash this transformative potential of governance by incorporating technology and digitized data in the design, delivery and assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Open data initiatives are being undertaken as part of the commitment of governments, civil society and private sector to add value to data by making the data more easily accessible for daily decision making of the government, business sector and citizens.

Important considerations for the open data initiatives are the kind of data that should be considered as belonging to the public domain and how more detailed micro data can be made available by matching access with ethics, privacy and security protocols.

Vast numbers of data sets that do not contain information on a particular individual or organization (such as weather data, GPS data, school enrollment, transport schedules and many others) are routinely made available as open data. However, other data (such as micro-data from population, economic or agricultural censuses, household surveys and others) can only be part of the public domain if proper precautions are taken to protect privacy and confidentiality of the individual person and organization. In a similar sense, data generated by civil, business or building registers could be made public under strict ethical and security protocols and secure technology platforms. Non-traditional data sources from civil society or private sector could also be useful for research and daily decision making purposes.

In many countries, open data is a catalyst for new research and services for citizens by integrating traditional and non-traditional data in an innovative technology framework and infrastructure. Open data platforms could broaden this opportunity by applying innovative solutions and powerful analytical tools, which in turn could deliver new jobs and growth and a more equitable, and just society as formulated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Open data initiatives require that governments are transparent and accountable, and that they engage regularly and meaningfully with citizens.

The Seminar builds on the outcome of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable development Data in which open data initiatives are mentioned three times under the strategic area of innovation and modernization of national statistical systems. More specifically, the Global Action Plan calls for a) exploring ways of revising the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to include relevant and appropriate aspects of open data initiatives; b) clarifying and supporting the role of the national statistical systems in open data initiatives, consistent with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; and c) encouraging national statistical offices to embrace the open data initiative and ensure stakeholders of the national statistical system are part of the process.

The seminar will explore how open data initiatives can provide advantages to national statistical offices operating in both advanced and less advanced statistical systems, including in countries with limited resources. It will highlight the benefits and efficiency gains to the overall economy and to ordinary citizens of sharing data in open formats and with open licenses, and how it can also enhance capacity and knowledge to produce high quality official statistics. The seminar will provide a forum to take stock how countries around the world are progressing on open data and showcase best practices. It will be organized around various aspects of the emerging issue of the development and use of open data platforms, and will be structured in four blocks of topics introduced by presentations followed by discussion with the audience facilitated by a moderator.

Partnerships

It has now been well recognized that strategic dialogue and collaboration between government, private sector and civil society are crucial factors in unlocking the transformative potential of technology and data in support of the good governance and sustainable development. With good progress made in developing open data initiatives, national practices can be shared about the role of national statistical offices in national consultations for open data initiatives as well as the articulation of the various aspects to be covered in the assessment of the readiness for and monitoring of the open data initiatives.

Technology

For an efficiently functioning open data environment, the existing statistical methodology, applications and services have to be supplemented with open data principles and standards, open source applications, innovative storage, advanced computing capability, and other information technology solutions. An open data framework facilitates the integration of traditional survey and census data with administrative sources, geospatial information and big data.

The official statistical community will need to consider the policy and technology platform that can be made available as a public good to national statistical offices to practice and share

experience with trusted data environments using the latest technologies for data storage, processing, analytics and dissemination.

Legislation and institutional setting

The principles of data rights and access to information and the Codes of Practice for official statistics are to be followed to address the concerns related to open data. The statistical community is challenged to envisage how the Fundamental Principles of official statistics can be interpreted and extended to cover open data principles taking into account the legal environments and the institutional arrangements for data access and sharing among government, civil society, business sector and citizens.

Capacity building and resource mobilization

The development, maintenance and use of open data platforms require competent and knowledgeable staff. Training and capacity building services are essential to build and elevate professional skills for the adoption of open data protocols and principles. Open data initiatives also require expertise in data ethics and security and information management practices that national statistical agencies can provide. This could be as much about national statistical agencies providing expertise for open data initiatives, and the advantages for national statistical agencies to obtain access to the latest technological expertise for the production of official statistics. These capacity building requirements need to be identified at different levels of readiness for open data initiatives and integrated in national statistical development strategies (NSDSs) and statistical work programs. Also adequate resources need to be identified to fund these open data initiatives, both from traditional funding sources but also through innovative financing mechanisms such as public-private partnership with a public good component.

Audience

The Friday Seminar will gather together Chief Statisticians and other key players engaged in advancing and promoting open data initiatives from civil society and the business sector. The discussion will support their joint efforts to work toward establishing practical steps and plan activities to strengthen collaboration and coordination within the open data community.

Outcome

The Secretariat will prepare a short summary note in consultation with the moderators of the various sessions and the main findings of the Seminar. The Commission will be briefed on the main conclusions, in particular if any relevant follow-up actions are proposed, which the Commission may want to consider interpreting in its agenda

B. Proposed Agenda

Opening

10.00am -10.30am

Opening and welcoming remarks: Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director of United Nations Statistics Division

Key note:

Ms. Shaida Badiee, Partner and Co-founder Open Data Watch

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Partnerships

10.30am – 11.45am

Moderator: Mr. Julio Santaella, President, National Institute of Statistics and Geography, Mexico

Mr. Joel Gurin, President, Center for Open Data Enterprise

Mr. Timothy Herzog, World Bank

Ms. Jenna Slotin, Senior Director, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data

Ms. Lisa Grace Bersales, National Statistician, Philippine Statistics Authority

Q&A 30 minutes

Technology

11.45am – 1.00pm

Moderator: Ms. Teresa Dickinson, Deputy Government Statistician and Deputy Chief Executive, Statistics New Zealand

Mr. Anil Arora, Chief Statistician, Statistics Canada

Mr. Bert Kroese, Deputy Director General, Statistics Netherlands

Mr. Matt Stempeck, Director of Corporate Affairs, Technology and Civic Engagement, Microsoft

Mr. Mark Ryland, Chief Architect, Amazon Web Services (AWS)

Q&A – 30 minutes

Legislation and institutional environment

3.00pm – 4.15pm

Moderator: Mr. Ivo Havinga, Assistant Director, United Nations Statistics Division

Ms. Albina Chuwa, Director General, National Statistical Office of Tanzania (TBC)

Mr. Julio Santaella, President, National Institute of Statistics and Geography, Mexico

Ms. Ania Calderon, Executive Director, Open Data Charter

Mr. Tom Orrell, Senior Advocacy Advisor, Publish What You Fund

Q&A 30 minutes

Capacity building and resource mobilization

4.15pm – 5.30pm

Moderator: Ms. Haishan Fu, Director of Development Data Group, World Bank Group

Ms. El Iza Mohamedou, Deputy Secretariat Manager, Paris 21

Mr. Oliver Chinganya, Director, Economic Commissions for Africa

Mr. Neil Jackson, Chief Statistician, DFID

Q&A 30 minutes

Closing panel of moderators

5.30pm – 6.00 pm

Moderator: Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director, United Nations Statistics Division

Panel:

Mr. Julio Santaella, President, National Institute of Statistics and Geography, Mexico

Ms. Teresa Dickinson, Deputy Government Statistician and Deputy Chief Executive, Statistics New Zealand

Mr. Ivo Havinga, Assistant Director, United Nations Statistics Division

Ms. Haishan Fu, Director of Development Data Group, World Bank Group