



THE INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

Irena Krizman, Vice-President
iren.krizman@gmail.com

P.O. Box 24070, 2490 AB, The Hague
The Netherlands www.isi-web.org

February 16, 2015

Invitation

**to the UNSC Side Event organized by the International Statistical Institute
Tuesday, 3 March 2015, 1.15 pm - 2.30 pm, Conference Room 7 (CB)**

To: Heads of National and International Statistical Offices and Statistical Agencies

Dear Colleague:

I am writing on behalf of the President and the Executive Committee of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) to invite you to an open meeting on:

**Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS) and Professional Ethics in the Era of Big Data:
Challenges & Strategies for Implementation – A Panel Discussion**

This meeting will be held as a Side Event at the UNSC in New York on Tuesday 3 March 2015 from 1:15-2:30 pm in Conference Room 7 (CB). The announcement of the meeting can be also found at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/SideEvents_2015.htm.

The panel will consist of:

Panellists:

Katherine Wallman, Chief Statistician of the United States, Office of Management and Budget;
Co-chair, Friends of the Chair Group on the implementation of FPOS;
Wayne Smith, Chief Statistician of Canada, Statistics Canada; Chairman of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES);
Sabine Warschburger, Statistician, United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD);
Eduardo Sojo Garza-Aldape, President of the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics, Mexico;
Vijay Nair, President of the ISI; Donald A. Darling Professor of Statistics at the University of Michigan, USA.

Moderator: Irena Krizman, ISI Vice-President; Former Director General of Slovenia National Statistics Office.

The field of Official Statistics has never been of greater importance, and at the same time, has never faced greater challenges. In addition to the traditional issues, the 'Big Data' phenomenon and the associated 'Data Revolution' are bringing new challenges. But they are also creating opportunities for improving statistical practice worldwide. The panel discussion will address some of these challenges and share ideas and strategies on how to move forward.

The United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (FPOS) and the ISI's Declaration of Professional Ethics (DPE) are two crucial instruments that can assist NSOs, their leadership, their staff, and key stakeholders to promote sound statistical practice in this vital field. The ISI would like to generate discussion on the interplay between FPOS and ISI's DPE. Many of the issues brought to the attention of the ISI leadership in recent years are violations of the FPOS rather than issues dealing with individuals. There is a grey area between FPOS and ISI's DPE, and many of the issues fall in between organizational and individual levels. The ISI believes that the statistical community needs to jointly discuss and develop strategies to address these issues in the future.

I do hope you will accept our invitation to join the meeting and contribute to the discussion. There will be ample time for open discussions from the floor.

The ISI's motto is "Statistical Science for a Better World." It will be wonderful if we can partner with you to accomplish the goal of building a better world through Statistics.

For organisational purposes, may I kindly ask you to confirm your participation by sending an email to the ISI Director Ada van Krimpen at an.vankrimpen@cbs.nl?

With best regards,



Irena Križman,
Vice-President, ISI

Enclosures:

Appendix I: Some of the discussion topics for the session

Appendix II: Information on the ISI

Appendix I: Discussion Topics

What are the major threats to the implementation and practice of good ethical standards in statistics in general and in your organisation? (Lack of resources, political pressure, public mistrust, lack of legislation etc.) What suggestions do you have for addressing them and for treating different types of non-compliance/violations of FPOS or DPE?

Public trust is essential for any statistical system. What are the main challenges in your institution and region, or at the world level to gain and retain the public trust? How are you addressing these issues in your organisation?

The emergence of the 'Big Data' phenomenon and the associated 'Data Revolution' are providing tremendous opportunities as well as new challenges.

- In your view, what are some of the major opportunities and how should we take advantage of them? What initiatives and infrastructure should be developed and how could we develop collaborations?
- The challenges include data access, data quality, privacy, and security. There are also many other issues: a) How to ensure that use of non-traditional sources of data will not compromise the professional standards in statistics and risk decreasing public trust in statistical data and analyses either at the country, or international level? b) How to deal with privacy-efficiency trade-off in the context of greater access to administrative and Big Data sources? Can you choose a few major challenges that are of interest to you and discuss how we should address them?
- There are many developments in academia, business and industry related to Big Data. How can Official Statistics benefit from collaborating with these groups and what mechanisms do you suggest for collaboration?
- How can these different institutions contribute to the implementation of the FPOS and to the promotion of, and adherence to, sound ethical principles? How can they benefit from FPOS and DPE? Should professional ethics and relevant parts of FPOS become part of the academic curriculum?

The latest report of the Friends of the Chair group on the implementation of the FPOS suggests that the UNSC "call upon all organizations to reference the FPOS when addressing non-compliance within their own related frameworks, to the extent and within the time frame possible". Who should be the watchdog of the FPOS at the world level? Do we need another "Board on Ethics" composed by trusted statisticians and appointed at the highest UN level?

What are effective strategies to promote FPOS and ethical principles to stakeholders like media, society and governments?

Many violations of professional ethics that are brought to the attention of the ISI involve organizations rather than individuals. There is a huge grey area between the FPOS and the ISI's DPE. How do we address this gap? What are the responsibilities of the international agencies versus professional organizations in addressing these violations?

Appendix II: Information about the ISI



THE INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE

Statistical Science for a Better World

www.isi-web.org

Join the International Statistical Institute as an Institutional Member

The International Statistical Institute (ISI) welcomes national, regional and international statistical agencies (or institutes) in official statistics to become institutional members. Institutional membership in the ISI provides many benefits as described below.

ISI: A Brief Profile

The ISI is a non-governmental organization with a long history and consultative status in the United Nations. It provides a platform for official statisticians at all levels and from across the world to get together and discuss issues of mutual interest in a constructive and supportive environment. These include state-of-the-art practices and innovations as well as issues dealing with professional ethics. Our professional meetings and virtual networks provide an opportunity for free discussion of challenges, problems, and constraints faced by organizations.

In addition to official statistics, the ISI family includes seven other international Associations, covering survey statistics, statistical education, business and industrial statistics, environmetrics, statistical computing, statistical theory, and probability. The ISI family has around 5,000 individual members from over 140 countries, and provides international linkages with statistical professional societies nationally and worldwide.

The ISI organizes many different activities to benefit members and promote the statistics profession worldwide. Examples of these activities are given below:

Conferences:

Our flagship event is the biennial ISI World Statistics Congress (WSC), attended by more than 2,000 participants from all over the world. The scientific program is designed to appeal to the general audience. It includes numerous sessions and panel discussions related to official statistics. The last WSC in August 2013, hosted by the Census and Statistics Department of Hong Kong, was very successful. The next congress will be in July 2015 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and will be hosted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

The ISI and its Associations also organize many regional and specialized conferences around the world. Examples include the conferences organized by the International Association for Official Statistics (2012 in Kiev and in 2014 in Vietnam), and the ISI Regional Statistics Conference in November 2014 (hosted by the Central Bank of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur).

Statistical Capacity Building:

The ISI has been involved in statistical capacity building in developing regions through various initiatives such as: a) Regional workshops for high-level official statisticians in Senegal, Ethiopia, and South Korea; b) Workshops in applied statistics and environmetrics in Benin, South Africa and India; c) A virtual mentoring program for young statisticians; and d) Securing funding from the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB) administered by World Bank and other sources to support participation of statisticians from developing countries at ISI and Association Conferences.

Professional Ethics:

In 2010, the ISI Council adopted a 'Declaration of Professional Ethics' aimed at disseminating shared values and practices that can help statisticians in making ethical judgments and decisions. These have been very helpful to official statisticians as well as other practitioners. The ISI also provides support or makes interventions in specific cases of professional ethics as appropriate.

Publications:

The ISI and its Associations publish a variety of publications that are available free of charge or at reduced prices to members, including *International Statistical Review* (an expository journal) and the *Journal of the International Association of Official Statistics*. On-line proceedings from the WSCs and other conferences are also available.

Value and Benefits of ISI Institutional Membership

Enjoy all the benefits of an ISI elected member: The Head of an organization with ISI institutional membership (such as the President, Director General, Director, or Chief Statistician) or his/her representative is entitled to the benefits of individual membership.

Get reduced rate (50% discount) for all staff members from your organization joining the ISI as regular members.

Network with statisticians, statistics organizations and anyone interested in Statistics from across the World.

Participate in a variety of conferences, workshops and meetings dedicated to Statistics and its applications, and enjoy reduced registration fees; receive reduced rates for two participants for the ISI WSCs.

Contribute to, and benefit from, statistical capacity building initiatives for developing regions.

Collaborate with a community of statisticians who support, advocate, and promote ethical practice in Statistics.

Get access to ISI family's journals and other publications that disseminate state-of-the-art developments in the field, at reduced subscription rates. Receive a free hard copy of the *International Statistical Review*.

Enjoy the prestige of belonging to a vibrant, yet traditional Statistical Society and contribute to activities such as the highly successful International Year of Statistics that was celebrated in 2013.

We hope you will join the ISI and partner with us in promoting the Statistics Profession worldwide!

Currently, the ISI has around 100 institutional members from national statistical offices (also called ex-officio members). These members are an indispensable part of the ISI and play a crucial role in the ISI's mission 'to promote the understanding, development, and good practice of statistics worldwide'. We invite you to join us today!

You can join by filling in the [membership form](#) or you can send an email expressing your interest in ISI membership to Ms. Ada van Krimpen, ISI Director, at an.vankrimpen@cbs.nl.

We look forward to welcoming you to the ISI family. We will be happy to give you more information by email or in person.

Vijay Nair, ISI President, isi-president@umich.edu ; phone: +1 734 763 8018

Irena Krizman, ISI Vice-President, iren.krizman@gmail.com ; phone: + 386 1735083

Ada van Krimpen, ISI Director, an.vankrimpen@cbs.nl; phone: + 31 70 3375738

Follow ISI on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

For more information about the ISI please visit our website at www.isi-web.org